

JUNE 1959 VOLUME 6 No 6

The London Magazine

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A monthly review of literature

Dorothy Richardson

Data for Spanish Publisher

A Last Meeting by Vincent Brome

The Living Dead—V: Dorothy Richardson
by Rachel Trickett

JOHN HOLLOWAY

Three Poems

A. E. HOUSMAN

The Death of Socrates

FRIEDRICH DÜRRENMATT

The Tunnel

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The Forked Island

MARGARET LANE

on Turgenev

EDITED BY JOHN LEHMANN

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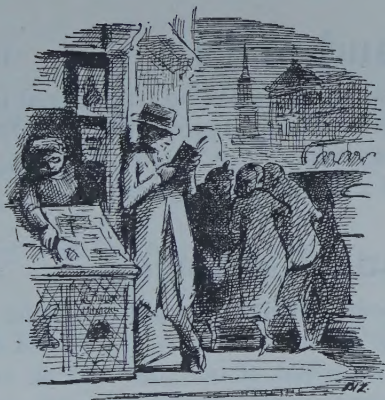
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THE LONDON MAGAZINE



EDITED BY

John Lehmann

JUNE 1959 VOLUME 6 NO 6

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Flower Piece

A garden is a lovesome thing, I wot,
Though versed in lore botanical I'm not.
I don't know vertigo from alopecia.
And often take dementia for amnesia.
But, ever-present in this pleasant spot is
My pet — the oh, so thirsty epiglottis;
I sprinkle it with Guinness every day,
An old-time gardener's remedy, they say,
Attributed by some to C. Linnæus,
Which proves that Nature, too, adores Guinnæus.



Foreword

History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake' were the famous words of Stephen Dedalus to the schoolmaster in *Ulysses*. Mr Delmore Schwartz has recently told us that when *Ulysses in Nighttown*, the play constructed by Miss Marjorie Kentin out of the nightmares and hallucinations which bear such a disturbing likeness to the history of the twentieth century as produced in New York, several young writers of the Beat Generation were so powerfully moved that they interrupted their studies of Zen Buddhism to re-read (or read) Joyce.

There is a sense in which to awake from the nightmare of the contemporary world appears as the basic aim of Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and their associates of the Beat movement. They contemptuously label anyone who tries to come to terms with the forces that make the twentieth century world go round as a 'Square'; they reject organized society, organized religion, organized politics totally; they want to jump off the train and live in an existential awareness of the present only, where all is naked feeling and sensation uncontrolled by the inhibitions of time past and the preoccupations of time future. As the American editors of the new anthology, *Protest*,¹ write: 'In the Beat Generation's most underground depths, despite the continuousness of the search for meaning, there is no growth or accumulation of experience which is knowledge. For the moment is devoid of contact with another; it stands an island of felt emotion, soon to disappear leaving no ripple.'

Protest presents us with samples of the work of the leading Beat writers, of the 'Angry Young Men' of our own country side by side with them, and concludes with a selection of the critical appraisals that have been published about both. But, as the editors are in part obliged to admit, the description just quoted really has nothing at all to do with our so-called Angries, who in any case begin to dissolve as a movement the moment one tries to get them together for the school photograph. The Angries, they say, 'still care', while the Beat Generation 'are beyond caring'. This seems to me an absolutely fundamental difference, not just a difference of emphasis but a common outpouring of protest. Oddly enough, the 'Angry Young Man' who most resembles the Beat Generation in his way of thinking, is Colin Wilson; but even he differs from them fairly radically in wanting to construct something positive, a new religious attitude evolved from the thought and experience of the past. Most

Protest. Edited by Gene Feldman and Max Gartenberg. (Souvenir Press. 25s.)

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THE HOGARTH PRESS

FOREWORD

the others who appear in the anthology, and they include John Galsworthy, Kingsley Amis, John Braine, John Osborne, George Scott, and so on. I want to say to them, and to me to represent, in so far as one can speak of them as having anything in common, another of those periodic movements of revolt against the Establishment which have occurred so frequently in Britain during the past fifty years. The object of these revolts is nearly always to get *in*, and drive others out, in order to change the way society is arranged and the direction in which it's moving; and not to get right outside something built by and for Squares who evermore shall be there.

Several of the works of Jack Kerouac and Chandler Brossard have already been published in this country; but even if one had not read them, the extracts assembled in *Protest* would show one, not only the virtues of the Beat writers—the lyrical flow of Kerouac's writing at its best, for instance, the comic descriptive power of Anatole Broyard—but also some of the hidden rocks, the contradictions and absurdities they've already struck. The craving for the immediate and untrammelled in experience, for feeling with the pale cast of thought scrubbed right off it, all too easily degenerates into the *faux naïf* and sentimental, the sophisticatedly unsophisticated childlike simplicity with all critical discrimination abjured.

An old fuddy-duddy British survivor of the pre-1950 world, I moved himself to protest that if you can swallow *Howl* you can swallow the Rockies, that the cult of everything that is anti-national and anti the past will only too quickly lead once more down a false turning that an earlier generation called Fascism, might expect to be Howled down. But what is this? Mr Nelson Algren, who receives a pat on the head from Mr Rexroth for his novels of the Chicago underworld and his anti-establishment slogan, 'It is better to be on the lam than on the cover of *Time* magazine', on record, after a recent missionary appearance of a group of Beat writers in his native city, as having described one of them as 'already in orbit around himself', and gone on to say: 'I believe the Beatnik movement is in aid and comfort to those columns where complacency sits embattled, prepared to assault any indication of originality in the arts as a deliberate affront to the American businessman. . . . It thus becomes the artist's duty to expose himself as a perfect riot, a ginstruck phoney, clown and goofnik alienated from the lives of ordinary Americans.' It is instructive, and sad, to see at what a pace, in our exasperated civilization, exploitation follows on revolt, and protest catches up with protest after protest. History is still a nightmare, and no one has woken up.

JOHN LEHMANN

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EDITED BY CARL BODE

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JOHN HOLLOWAY

Three Poems



THE PARAKEETS

Across the fiery sandstone walls
The green tails of the parakeets
Make horizontal waterfalls
That vanish in the deep retreats
Where they assemble, school on school,
The casuarina trees and neems ;
There still I catch their brilliant gleams;
Minute green suns that radiate cool.

Beside them, all the leafage pales
To dusty grey. They scream and shout
Hanging and scrambling, with their tails,
Against the bark, spread fanwise out,
Yet when they flee again, they go
So sharp and straight and swift in flight
(Those tails become green spines of light)
It seems the arrow speeds the bow.

The twilight skyline smoulders. But
Against that deepening glow they lack
All colour; wing to roost, and cut
Clear silhouettes of velvet black.
They made their greenness out of sun;
Although they seemed its counterpart,
Blazing against its blaze, at heart
Fact and counterpart were one.

JOHN HOLLOWAY
DRUM AND DANCER

During the learning phase, the drum
Passage by passage declares
The dance, in one serene continuum
Sensed by the instructor alone,
Source of his guidance.
The dancer's body falters through its language
To ape the greater body of the dance
Fragment by fragment.
Remains a person merely, not a thing.
Still the instructor's finger-tips
And wrists, upon the drum, ring
The dance vocabulary out as clear as lips.
Authority and beauty wing to wing.

The learning phase proceeds. The sound,
Receding and varying, informs
The maze the dancer works to and fro on the ground.
The years of his journey. He seems
Asleep as he labours
And changes till the dance begins to grow
(Teacher and drum both wait for when it flowers)
Impersonal, filled
With meaning as an atmosphere with air.
In it at last the dancer swims;
Until he and the drummer share
The dawning independence of his limbs,
Couple, relax and breed, as lovers pair.

Lovers they are; but what swift speech
On the drum, joyfully, sorrowfully,
Rings out, there is no more to give or teach,
Is not in the tongue of the dance.
In a kind of silence
The wrists pad softly, answer like a servant,
Accompany, follow: now wholly the dance
Itself descends,
Abstract, to flow through mortal agencies,
As if a giant bird should come
Into the confines of a house,
Its winnowing pinions fill an astonished room,
Imperious, gentle, as a sudden kiss.

THREE POEMS
ROCK TEMPLE

Pure fluid dark
Wells up in the cool void within the rock
To chasten the eyesight. Which
Records only the cube of light,
One firm, square cut
Relying on mere depth,
To change giant daylight to a vague flow
Swimming into this vaguer darkened sea.

‘You must wait now.’

Waiting, a more deliberate kind of sleep
(Like lazy nets, sagging, sinking,
Miles down, limp in their blindfold water)
Until the eyesight pastures on its night.

And then, as image graved across the floor,
Sleeping, it is a god who brings
A smoke of light, to spread as slow as smoke,
But pearly in the oyster of the rock,
Diffusing from the profile, arm, or hand
Unalterably raised,
Inflections to admonish, or rebuke;
Those past, and future acts, right for a god.

But now both are consumed
(As too must be his nature)
In an unchanging gentle spacious present
That rises like a dusky water-flower,
A soft half dark
Foaming on grave potential silence like a sea;
A fire like water, light as quiet as dark.

DOROTHY M. RICHARDSON

Data for Spanish Publisher¹

Edited by Joseph Prescott



My birth, towards the end of last century (in May 1873), bringing my parents their third daughter, was a disappointment to both of them, and my father, perhaps because I proved wilful, and sometimes quite unmanageable, early acquired the habit of calling me his son. Finally there were four daughters spending their very happy childhood in a spacious, large-gardened house near one of the loveliest reaches of the Thames and not far from the ancient university town of Oxford, whence elderly sages, visiting my father, would occasionally appear in our midst. Inheriting the whole of my grandfather's considerable business, my father had sold it and settled down to a life of leisure as an amateur of most of the arts and a deeply interested spectator of the doings of science, never missing a gathering, at home or abroad, of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, of which he was a member. Although his epicureanism, since his forbears for generations had been stern Puritans, was both fastidious and firmly disciplined, the spectacle of his existence nevertheless defined life to my dawning intelligence as perpetual leisure spent in enchanting appreciations.

¹[*Editor's Note.* This essay was sent to me on January 3, 1951, by the author of the twelve-part sequence novel *Pilgrimage*, by way of providing biographical information for an article on her life and work which I was preparing for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. In an accompanying letter, Miss Richardson wrote, in part: 'Always so far, save on one occasion, I have refused data. I gave in on behalf of the publisher of a translation who was, I felt, both plucky & ill-used. The translation, speculatively made, had been banned on account of the "social subversiveness & atheism" of the first volume, probably the only one the Spanish censor had troubled to read). On the intervention of the British Council, the ban was lifted & I could hardly refuse the help appealed for by the enterprising publisher.' On May 24, 1951, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, owners of the copyright for *Pilgrimage*, informed me that *Pilgrimage* had not been translated into any foreign language.

The essay is here published for the first time with the kind permission of Mrs Rose Isserlis Odle, literary executrix of Miss Richardson.]

My mother's life, too, was leisurely. Her ample staff of devoted old-fashioned servants loved and never left her unless it were to depart into marriage. She came of a long line of west-country yeoman landholders and although for the greater part of her life a semi-invalid it was she, our saint, who tried to make me see life as jollity, and, unconsciously, fostered my deep-rooted suspicion of "facts" and ordered knowledge. From the first I hated, and whenever possible evaded, orderly instruction in regard to the world about me. Not that I lacked the child's faculty of wonder. In a sense, I had it to excess. For what astonished, and still astonishes, me more than anything else was the existence, anywhere, of anything at all. But since things there were, I preferred to become one with them, in the child's way of direct apprehension which no subsequent "knowledge" can either rival or destroy, rather than to stand back and be told, in regard to any of the objects of my self-losing adoration, this and that. These objects were chiefly the garden, as known to me when no one was about, the woods, the sky, and sunlight.

"Education", therefore, came to me at first in the guise of a destroyer whom secretly I defied. At the age of five I attended for a year at a small private school and willingly learned to read, fascinated by the variety of combinations of letters and fired by the challenging irregularities of our unphonetic English spelling. All else went in at one ear and out at the other. When I was six, things began to move, and I recall, as if it were yesterday, the day when my life seemed to come to an end. We left our home. For two years, on account of my mother's health, we lived on the south coast in a hired house with alien furniture. The local school made no impression beyond increasing my ability to read and write. But the sea was there, though only the channel sea in place of the boundless Atlantic of our summer holidays. It was there, day and night. From this unhomely home where, on an unforgettable night, I woke from a dream sobbing with the realisation that one day my parents would die, and feeling suddenly very old, we moved to the edge of one of the most charming of London's south-western suburbs, to a home that became for me, from the moment we turned in, from a wide roadway lined with pollarded limes and drove up the approach between may-trees in bloom and swept round past a lawn surrounded by every kind of flowering shrub, to pull up in front of the deep porch of a friendly-faced, many-windowed house, a continuous enchantment; save when, by some apparently unprovoked outburst of wrath and resentment, I had scared and alienated all my family.

Until my eighteenth year, apart from intermittent distresses, over my mother's fluctuating health, and early secret worries produced

by the problem of free-will and the apparent irrationality of the Christian faith, life was very good and the future lay ahead bathed in gold. Music returned which from our seaside house had been almost absent. To the classics of my childhood were added the alien wonders of Wagner and Chopin, who alone among the moderns were fully welcomed by my father. The scores of Gilbert and Sullivan and other musical comedies, eagerly purchased by my elder sisters after visits to the theatre, also dance music and popular songs, were relegated to the schoolroom piano, though the usual sentimental ballads, and light instrumental music, were welcomed at the "musical evenings" sandwiched between select gatherings of adepts for classical chamber music. My sisters were growing up and croquet on the front lawn was abandoned for very strict tennis on the sunk lawn in the back garden. Boating began, on the river near by. Skating in the winter and, all the year round, dances increasingly took the place of musical evenings. All this was to go on for ever. For just one year after our arrival, life was dimmed each day by the presence of a governess, a worthy being who, if she could, would have formed us to the almost outmoded pattern of female education: the minimum of knowledge and a smattering of various "accomplishments". For me, apart from music-lessons and learning to join, without decorating them with rows of blood-dots, fascinatingly various scraps of coloured material, she was torment unmitigated and even her attempts at bribery, by gifts of chocolate mice, could not prevent my sliding, whenever opportunity offered, under the table.

But school, when it came, was revelation. The Head, a disciple of Ruskin, fostered our sense of fair play, encouraged us to take broad views, hear all sides and think for ourselves. We learned all about our country's internal struggle against every sort of absolutism. Some of us felt ourselves hoary sages with a definite mission in life. Then there was Literature, and again the sense of coming into a goodly heritage. Our aged literature master had been in his youth a friend of Robert Browning and while inevitably he made us Browningsites, he gave us through this one doorway the key to much else. In contrast to our Shakespearian teacher who insisted on our imbibing, with every few lines of a play, so many learned annotations that the very name of our great poet became a burden. Even so, there was still the fascination of words, of their sturdy roots, their growth and transformation, and the strange drama of the pouring in from every quarter of the globe of alien words assimilated and modified to the rhythm of our own speech, enriching its poetry and making its spelling and its pronunciation the joy of those who love

and the despair of all others. French, some of us painlessly acquired through sheer adoration of the white-haired old man, a scholar, who discoursed at large, gently told us tales, read to us, or dictated, French prose, taking for granted that we had learned, each week, the allotted page of rules. German came to us in a series of scenes, with a hot-tempered Fräulein of Junker birth and convictions, sometimes reaching proportions of sound and fury sufficient to bring in the Head from her study next door with oil for the troubled waters. To my inability to endure the teaching of geography unrelated to anything else on earth, I owed my removal, at the request of my parents to whom in my misery I had frantically appealed, from any geography lessons whatsoever and was placed, in compensation, in a class for the study of logic and psychology, newly introduced into the sixth form curriculum. Twice a week, among these stately elders, I delightedly acquired the rules of formal logic, joyously chanted the mnemonic lines representing the syllogisms and felt, with the growth of power to detect faulty reasoning, something akin to the emotion later accompanying my acquisition of a match-key. Psychology, however, with its confidence and its amazing claims, aroused, from the first, uneasy scepticism.

In due course I found myself in the sixth form and head of the school. Almost unawares, for life was opening out and school had many rivals. Yet leaving school, in spite of all that seemed to lie ahead, was tragedy. Once more, it seemed, the end of life. But worse was to follow. My father, through disastrous speculation, lost the greater part of his resources. We were poor. The future offered no hope of redemption. Some of the servants were dismissed, their places being taken by my sisters, engaged to be married and willing, therefore, to explore the unknown mysteries of domesticity. It dawned upon me that I must make my own living. Since in those days teaching was the only profession open to penniless gentlewomen, I accepted, because I liked the idea of going abroad, the first post offered by the London agency I secretly visited: that of English teacher in a school in Germany. In vain my horrified family fought against this outrageous enterprise and to Germany I went, returning at the end of six months convinced that many of the evils besetting the world originated in the enclosed particularist home and in the institutions preparing women for such homes. An impression strengthened by further teaching experience, in school and family respectively. My sisters meantime had married. We had lost my mother and our home was finally broken up. Thrown on my own resources, longing to escape from the world of women, I gladly accepted a post with connections of my family, a secretarial job, daily, offering me

the freedom I so desired. Transferring myself to a Bloomsbury attic, I existed for years on the salary of one pound a week, usual in those days for women clerks, scarcely aware of my poverty and never giving a thought to all I had left behind. In its place stood London and what London can mean as a companion, I have tried to set down in *Pilgrimage*. There were of course summer holidays, spent with friends at home and abroad, and week-ends with relatives and friends with whom I shared old associations. Delightful restorative times of ease and orderly living. Also as much as I liked of various and interesting social life in company with the friendly household of my employers. But from all these excursions I returned to my solitudes with the sense of escaping from a charming imprisonment.

During these London years I explored the world lying outside the enclosures of social life, and found it to be a kind of archipelago. Making contact with the various islands, with writers, with all the religious groups (from Roman Catholic to Unitarian and Quaker), with the political groups (from the Conservative Primrose League to the Independent Labour Party and Russian anarchists) and, through the medium of books and lectures, with the worlds of Science and Philosophy, I found all these islands to be the habitations of fascinating secret societies, to each of which in turn I wished to belong and yet was held back, returning to solitude and to nowhere, where alone I could be everywhere at once, hearing all the voices in chorus. The clear rather dictatorial voice of Science-still-in-its-heyday, still far from confessing its inability to plumb, unaided, the nature of reality. Then the philosophers whom, reading, I found more deeply exciting than the novelists. And the politicians, roaring irreconcilably one against the other, unanimous only in their determination to exclude, by almost any means, the collaboration of women from the national housekeeping. The clerics, of all varieties, still for the most part identifying religion with morality and inevitably revealing, though with naïve unconsciousness, in the definition of God presented to their congregations, the result of being enclosed in academies of males. For their God demanded first and foremost docility, fear, blind obedience and a constant meed of praise and adulation—all typically masculine demands. The mystics, so far, I had not encountered. Of art, apart from current academic work, I knew next to nothing.

Experiments in being engaged to be married were not entirely satisfactory. To be in love was indeed fatally easy, and a condition I cannot recall escaping, save for brief intervals, from adolescence onwards. But to face up to marriage was another matter, and on more than one occasion I withdrew a provisional pledge. Sometimes

the situation was reversed, my partner being the one to retreat. For a moment the Suffrage Movement diverted me from all else. Now and again all seemed darkness within and without, but always I failed to achieve, try as I would, a complete despair. At times the world-wide Catholic Church seemed seductively to offer a refuge. But it offered also the spectacle of the corrupting influence of power. It needed the Protestants. Tragedy. Well, if life were tragedy, it still was life, the ultimate astonisher.

Meanwhile I had begun to write. Translations and free-lance journalism had promised release from routine work that could not engage the essential forces of my being. The small writing-table in my attic became the centre of my life. In 1907 I escaped into the country. A series of sketches contributed to *The Saturday Review* moved a reviewer to urge me to try my hand at a novel. A suggestion that both shocked and puzzled me. The material that moved me to write would not fit the framework of any novel I had experienced. I believed myself to be, even when most enchanted, intolerant of the romantic and the realist novel alike. Each, so it seemed to me, left out certain essentials and dramatised life misleadingly. Horizontally. Assembling their characters, the novelists developed situations, devised events, climax and conclusion. I could not accept their finalities. Always, for charm or repulsion, for good or ill, one was aware of the author and applauding, or deploring, his manipulations. This, when the drama was a conducted tour with the author deliberately present telling his tale. Still more so when he imagined, as did Flaubert, that in confining himself to "*Constatation*" he remained imperceptible. In either case, what one was assured were the essentials seemed to me secondary to something I could not then define, and the curtain-dropping finalities entirely false to experience.

The first chapter-volume of *Pilgrimage*, begun in 1913, was finished just before the outbreak of war. Various publishers refused it and it finally appeared in the autumn of 1915. Meanwhile I had met my husband, an artist, who introduced me to a new world, the missing link between those already explored. In 1917 we were married, risking the adventure in spite of misgivings on both sides. These have been falsified and we are still married.

August 1943

RACHEL TRICKETT

The Living Dead—V

Dorothy Richardson



Too many people today Dorothy Richardson is little more than a name connected with a technique, an early practitioner of the 'stream of consciousness', the first intentional feminine realist. Looked at from this angle her faults and limitations are many and obvious. The influence of Henry James, half repudiated by her, but only too uneasily present in the later volumes of *Pilgrimage*, shows up her lack of intellectual distinction and reveals how much less subtle her own delicacy is than his finer sense of discriminations. Her connections with Virginia Woolf—'a woman mounted upon a magnificently caparisoned charger' as Dorothy Richardson obliquely described her—lead to similar comparisons: how she lacks the sheer cleverness, the irony and above all the hard clarity that creates formal perfection out of the most diffuse of Virginia Woolf's perceptions. And yet such judgements only pin Dorothy Richardson back to her point on the textbook graph of twentieth century trends and tendencies. They tell us nothing about her real quality.

To read *Pilgrimage*, the twelve novels through which Dorothy Richardson traces the odyssey of Miriam Henderson, her heroine, is to recognize a genuinely original talent, yet one which has unexpected links with tradition, too. She herself was delighted to find that her ideas on the nature of the novel had first been expressed not by James, but by Goethe:

It was nevertheless not without a sense of relief that the present writer recently discovered in *Wilhelm Meister* the following manifesto: 'In the novel, reflections and incidents should be the features; in drama character and action. The novel must proceed slowly, and the thought processes of the principal figure must, by one device and another, hold up the development of the work.' Length, slowness, reflection and recollected incident are to her the proper features of the novel's way of presenting reality: a way which escapes from the concentrated, time-centred, moral pre-occupations of the drama. And under the influence of this romantic

theory of narrative, she produced a work which is shapeless, faulty and exasperating, but which nevertheless possesses a clumsy vitality, an intensity and integrity which keep it alive when other more perfect productions are already turning a little brown at the edges.

Nobody, reading Dorothy Richardson today, will be startled by her style. The unpunctuated staccato sentences have a familiar ring; the intimate glimpses of a reaction just slightly off-centre and out of the ordinary have become reassuringly old-fashioned. Even those aspects of her technique which must have seemed especially bewildering to her original readers, like the lack of normal connections between episodes, and the dislocation of the time sequence, have lost their power of surprise. So many writers have copied her devices that we are no longer struck by momentary eruptions of memory, slow crab-like approaches to recollected or anticipated events, and all the apparatus for conveying sense impressions and half-apprehended significances. But we are left with the question: what was her peculiar intention in using them?

It takes great formal skill to handle the problem of time in narrative fiction when the traditional plot structure has been discarded, and many great novelists who have been concerned with time—writers like Sterne, Thackeray, Proust or Virginia Woolf—have been experimenters in construction and design. Dorothy Richardson is an unusual case of an experimenter who was not primarily interested in time nor in formal structure for its own sake. By her own confession, her experiments had a single aim: to discover the best way of expressing one particular kind of sensibility—a woman's. The twelve novels of *Pilgrimage* are all directed to this end of exploring the woman's view of life through the experience of a single heroine.

In this way Dorothy Richardson set out to make up to herself for the disappointment she felt with most other novels. So often they seemed to her fragmentary and partial. She thought that the traditional form of plot represented a characteristically masculine manipulation of facts to a preconceived pattern, and even new writers like James and Conrad displayed the same lack of humility:

Even as you read about Waymarsh and his 'sombre glow' and his 'attitude of prolonged impermanence' as he sits on the edge of the bed talking to Strether, and revel in all the ways James uses to reveal the process of civilizing Chad, you are distracted from your utter joy by fury over all he is unaware of. And even Conrad. The self-satisfied, complacent, know-all condescendingness of their handling of their material. . . . The torment of all novels is what is left out. The moment you are aware of it, there is torment in them. Bang, bang, bang, on they go, these men's books, like an

L.C.C. tram, yet unable to make you forget them, the authors, for a moment.

To be distracted while reading Henry James by 'all he is unaware of' is, to say the least, an uncommon experience, and though Dorothy Richardson 'groaned gently and resignedly' at the many accusations of 'feminism, of failure to perceive the value of the distinctively masculine intelligence', she could hardly complain if her readers found many of her ideas, as expressed by Miriam, sometimes eccentric to the point of fanaticism. For on this point she was a fanatic. With a single-minded and dogged persistence she pursued the woman's view of life and reality in all its inclusiveness, its sense of continuity and of 'being'. 'Women's controls appear to be feebler because they have so much more to control,' Miriam tells Hypo in one of their arguments. 'I don't mean physically. Mentally. By seeing everything simultaneously.'

Any woman writer is likely to reflect something of this attitude. It has often been noticed that *To the Lighthouse* deals with many of the same themes as *Pilgrimage*: assumed masculine superiority, feminine 'being' as opposed to male 'becoming' (the terms are Dorothy Richardson's own), the perilous exclusiveness of love between two people, and the comprehensiveness of the solitary vision. But Virginia Woolf shows as much concern with the possibilities of her medium, and with the artist's peculiar realization of these themes, as with their actual truth. Dorothy Richardson, on the other hand, is a propagandist. She wants to convince us that these truths are neglected and important, and that without them any picture of life is incomplete. She is passionately concerned about them, with an emotion that spills over into all her characters, into Miriam who recognizes them, and into the others from whom she learns their meaning and significance. Perhaps because of this concern, Miriam Henderson, tiresome, priggish, intractable as she is, is more real than the half-symbolic Mrs Ramsay, while Hypo Wilson, Miriam's intellectual lover, and Michael Shotov, her Russian Jewish suitor, are more completely understood as characters than Mr Ramsay. Indeed there is nowhere in Virginia Woolf a character so lovingly realized as Shotov, or presented with such emotional truth and intimacy, from the moment he appears in Mrs Bailey's boarding house to the final glimpse of him, alone on the lawn at Dimple Hill:

Looking from her window, early on Sunday morning before anyone was about, Rachel Mary had seen 'Mr Shotov' out on the dewy lawn alone, believing himself unobserved . . . *dancing*. A lonely little Jew, jigging about on her lawn, solemnly, clumsily, and yet with an appealing grace, the heavy bulk of his body re-

deemed by the noble head, face uplifted to the sky, beard-point extended in the alien Sussex air; rejoicing in the Lord, with the tablets of the Law invisibly held within his swaying arms. Was it because she saw me so nearly weeping that tears rose in her eyes also, behind the glint of amusement? Did she see his pathos?

This passage reveals another aspect of Dorothy Richardson's talent. For all her authenticity and realism, she is, like most propagandists, a passionate sentimentalist. It is both her virtue and her vice, for while it prevents her from seeing her characters, and particularly her heroine, with any detachment, it compels her to love the feelings they arouse. Miriam, irritably searching after the inner integrity which she believes is truth, preserving her emotional virginity against all the onslaughts of experience and human relationships, yet has the paradoxical feminine quality of entertaining what she rejects, of accepting it intuitively in her heart and her imagination. Her precious isolation is always threatened by her sheer curiosity, her susceptibility to charm and ability to 'take' everything.

It is this side of her nature that attracts her so violently to Amabel, Dorothy Richardson's sentimentalized study of the emancipated 'womanly' woman, who blazes through life, disrupting privacy and lavishing her emotions on everyone and everything—'a tornado, sweeping oneself off one's feet and one's possessions from their niches'. But for all the subtle and portentous analyses Miriam makes of Amabel, she reveals herself, after all, as that familiar figure, the traditional foil for a woman's heroine, Marianne to Miriam's Eleanor, Celia to her Dorothea, only intenser and more important, representing the other kind of feminine nature: 'Catholic Amabel' as Miriam calls her, the complement of the militant protestant heroine. In following the woman's view of life so consistently, Dorothy Richardson comes unexpectedly near to her sister novelists of the nineteenth century.

This woman's view of life, as we see it through Miriam's eyes, is a continual conflict between the instinct for accepting everything that happens and the desire to preserve an inner shrine of privacy to which she can retreat from unsatisfactory relationships. In the first three novels, before she seriously encounters love, Miriam samples different ways of life with a fresh and lively perception of their peculiar quality. Nothing in the whole work is more vivid than the description of the German school where she takes her first teaching post. All its charm and all its awfulness are conveyed through her inconsequent fluctuating reactions, and her complete acceptance of its every aspect. But in the later works, when she is successively entangled with Michael, with Densley, Hypo and Richard Roscola,

Miriam's experience is a repeated struggle between the urges to surrender and to retreat. Not only love, but almost everything she finds attractive threatens her inner life. Intellectual pleasures, typified by Hypo, are a sort of limitation of full experience: 'mental liveliness did obliterate expressiveness', she discovers, and she is equally dissatisfied with 'the appalling, the utter scrappiness of social life'. Solitude seems the only answer:

That's why I don't want experience: not to be caught into ways of doing and being that drive away solitude, the marvellous quiet sense of life at first hand.

Music, light, the four walls of her own room which seem to expand to embrace the whole world, glimpses of unexpected natural beauty, like the sea encroaching on a snowy shore, the flight of birds seen in a mirror, all these, singled out by the fragmentary and poignant method of fleeting impressionism, represent the true centre of her woman's existence.

Yet she never achieves the inner serenity these moments stand for, 'the quiet blissful insight whose price is composure', which she recognizes in the music of Bach. For it is an impossible price to pay in this maelstrom of total receptivity. Dorothy Richardson's understanding of the feminine experience is too complete for such a resolution. She pursues her course with a consistency that leads to unintentionally comic results. Miriam, rejecting Hypo her lover, and marrying off her best friends Michael and Amabel, retreats to a Quaker farming community where it seems as if she must at last find what she is seeking. But no. Richard Roscola, the young Quaker farmer begins to rouse in her the familiar treacherous sensations; she is in love again; it is impossible; and the last novel ends—or rather refuses to end—with Miriam, after her seventh unsuccessful love affair, setting out for Austria with a hopeful hint of her finding there a man she had met briefly abroad before. Only a novelist of the most confident irony could afford to leave her heroine in such a predicament. But there is no suspicion of irony at the end of *Pilgrimage*. Faint but pursuing, arguing, speculating, pontificating and surrendering, Miriam follows her interminable chase. And at last we realize that this pilgrimage is not, after all, a search for truth, but a search for identity, a journey into the self from which there is no way back. In the feminine view of life it is impossible to escape from people or from personality.

When they are discussing writers together, Hypo Wilson once suggests to Miriam that she should write novels like 'a feminine George Eliot'. It is not George Eliot who springs to mind when we read *Pilgrimage* though, but a less intellectual, a more prim and pas-

sionate interpreter of the woman's world—Charlotte Brontë. Dorothy Richardson for all her greater sophistication and poise has something of Charlotte Brontë's intenseness, her lack of humour, her fervour and integrity. She has the same intuitive love of people and places, and an obstinate desire to preach in the person of her heroine. But that best gift of feminine genius, the sense of the mundane poetry of common perception, is the finest quality they share. The German school, lovingly but ruthlessly recalled, the London boarding house, Mrs Corrie's country house, the Roscolas's farm are as vivid in *Pilgrimage* as Lowood and Thornfield Hall in *Jane Eyre*, or Madam Beck's garden and Brussels in *Villette*, and they are vivid in the same way and for the same reasons. Though she has rejected melodrama, Dorothy Richardson can convey, too, the same numb pain which comes from the pressure of the self that Charlotte Brontë shows in Lucy Snowe. But it is not, after all, surprising that, if she is like anyone, it should be Charlotte Brontë, the most feminine in her faults and her genius of the nineteenth century women writers.

Sensitivity is always counted the inevitable virtue of women's writing. But in spite of the delicacy of her impressions, Dorothy Richardson often seems almost insensitive, just as, in spite of reported witticisms and 'brilliant' conversations, she often seems humourless. Perhaps this is one of the penalties of the introspective method of narrative. But how, for instance, can she so unconcernedly record those dreadful endearments, slang and baby talk of the beloved sisters and girl friends of Miriam's youth, without a touch of comedy or satire? Only because the flapper is as comfortably and affectionately accepted by her as the unknown dreamy idealized girls who drift in and out of school life, and has just as much claim on her as the uncomfortable attraction of that resented and adored other species, the male. Sensitivity is a narrow word for her more common and instinctive quality, her power of realizing all the rich and various accumulation of raw material on which women's curiosity, their sentiments and sympathies are so lavishly expended. *Pilgrimage* reveals, with a paradoxically rich simplicity, that actual world of people and things which, in spite of ideals and aspirations that may defy it, women instinctively and tenaciously cherish. By the side of *Pilgrimage* Virginia Woolf's novels, with their beauty and formal skill, their far greater aesthetic power, seem scarcely feminine at all. In the last resort this is the measure of Virginia Woolf's superiority, but Dorothy Richardson's deliberate limitation, her fanatical devotion to the woman's outlook, is her unique claim on our attention, and, by its very completeness secures her a place among the writers whose work survives.

A Last Meeting with Dorothy Richardson



The February wind was driving across the pitch-black road as I forced my way towards a house whose name would be indistinguishable in the dark. The roar of the sea increased the babble of the wind, and five minutes later I walked up and down peering at the few gates, reading the names braille-fashion. The letters HILLSIDE presently appeared to my touch. Crossing a short path, almost at the door the wind thrust me against it. I knocked and waited; knocked again and waited. A glimmer of light came from a front window, and encouraged by this, I seized the knocker and hammered to make it heard above the wind. No reply. Stumbling to the window I peered through a crack in the curtains.

The sight was extraordinary. An old lady with a pile of yellowing hair, a shawl and a short knitted skirt was pacing up and down with almost military precision, her hands clasped around her, holding the shawl in position, her eyes fixed, her gait that of an automaton. Watching for perhaps a minute the ritual never failed or faltered. Precisely at the end of four strides she turned on her heel and paced back, her eyes fixed straight ahead, her lips slightly moving as though in colloquy with another. The illusion was heightened by a sudden gesture of one hand, a pause and an upward tilt of the head as if someone not there, someone taller than herself, had momentarily intervened. Then the pacing began again.

I hesitated and at last knocked on the window. A moment later I rapped sharply. The pacing remained unbroken. I went back to the door and hammered on it, but the wind swallowed every lesser sound and in desperation I tugged sharply at the door-handle. It turned and the door opened. The force of the wind carried the door and myself crashing into the hall scattering some papers and a hat, but the effect was salutary. Another door opened and there she stood, thickset, silent, with something of the concentrated power of sculpture in her bearing. Strands were blowing loose from the mass of

flowing hair across a broad forehead; her eyes were absent and full of pain; her head bent and listening. A flash went across the features difficult to interpret. I might have been something materialized on the wind from another world. She did not speak but paused in the door. I said, 'I'm Mr Brome . . . don't you remember . . .'

Suddenly she did and like a skin dropped at will she was another person, brisk, masculine, taking charge of the situation. The room we entered was a pleasant room in an ordinary villa, but books accumulated in accidental piles on the floor, on chairs and tables, and made any movement perilous. The mantelpiece was cluttered with unframed sketches, picture postcards, and faded reproductions fixed to the wall with drawing pins. There were two small armchairs, not opposite, but in line with one another, expressing a powerful 'prejudice' later to be discovered. A small table near the window carried a typewriter. From there she had written me many letters, some typed, some in that bold, dashing handwriting which at 77 conveyed a masculine strength and made beautiful a commonplace set of references. She would take a sheet of foolscap, turn it sideways and write across the whole length until the finished page sometimes resembled a medieval manuscript in its stylized perfection. One such letter had referred to H. G. Wells. It read:

'This planet Wells [said] is a misfit. We will find our way out among the stars, beyond our wildest dreams. Enlargement of the premises and improvement of the furniture leaving individuals unchanged. His final realization of the failure of his gospel, coupled with a complete inability to understand why his dictatorship was refused, was the tragedy of his last days. For his pathetically amusing pontificality was exchanged blind anger and dismay, and we had humanity at the end of its tether. . . . He became gentler and more considerate to those surrounding him towards the very end and when all was lost and he could fight no more, illumination may have dawned.'

Meeting her now, it was easy to associate the letter with the person. She spoke with the same precision as she wrote. I had always regarded Dorothy Richardson with reverence. According to that law which requires an author to be disappointing beside his or her work, I had come prepared for disillusionment, but I quickly became aware that I was in the presence of a personality no less remarkable than her work. It was hard to believe that this woman with the big head and the bearing, in repose, of a Buddha, had once been a dentist's receptionist, or that her powers of writing beautifully organized sentences of tremendous power and complexity, began with the most practical, down-to-earth contributions to a dental

journal, but during the next few days I reconciled many conflicting elements in her character.

We talked at length. She was still writing part of yet another volume of *Pilgrimage*. From a page a week she had fallen away to a paragraph, and from a paragraph to a few sentences. She had always written slowly. Each paragraph was, to her, a unique aesthetic problem; but if she remained, in her seventy-eighth year, in touch with the thought and literature of many parts of Western Europe, there was no questioning her failing powers.

Inevitably, on that first day, the talk came back to the H. G. Wells of her letter. From his philosophy and books we turned to his personality and from his personality to far more intimate matters. I had with me the Dent & Cresset edition of *Pilgrimage* and suddenly, she took up one volume, turned the pages and found with an alacrity only its author could achieve, the passage she wanted. She read aloud in a resonant voice: 'He came round the corner of the terrace his arms threshing the air to the beat of his swift walk . . . casting kind radiance as he came . . . the luminous clouded grey . . . eyes, the voice husky . . . the strange repellent mouth below the scraggy moustache, kept from weakness only by the perpetually hovering, disclaiming, ironic smile. . . .' [He brought] 'a fascination that could not be defined; that drove its way through all the evidence against it. . . . Married. Yet always seeming nearer and more sympathetic than other men . . .' She paused and turned to me: 'I remember him just like that,' she said. 'My novel was distinctly autobiographical. Hypo was Wells, Miriam in part myself and Alma, Mrs Wells.'

The talk grew steadily more intimate. Presently she took up another volume, turned the pages again and read in the same detached voice. 'She found his [Wells] arms about her in their turn and herself surprised and not able with sufficient swiftness to contract her expanded being that still seemed to encompass him, rocked unsatisfactorily to and fro while his voice, low and shy and with inappropriate unwelcome charm in it and the ineffectual gestures of a child learning a game, echoed unsuitable words.'

She stopped again. 'I think that catches him as a lover,' she said, and at last her voice changed. A new warmth came into it. '*Never completely lost*,' she said, 'marred in the end by selfconsciousness . . . always leaving something unpossessed.' She turned back to the book and read on: 'from far away below the colloquy, from where still it sheltered in the void . . . [Miriam's] spirit was making its own statement, profanely asserting the unattained being that was promising, however faintly, to be presently the surer for this survival. . . .'

She stopped and was silent for perhaps half-a-minute. Then she

said: 'He was rather ugly without his clothes.'

The following day we climbed a steep hill to lunch. She used a stick and became a little breathless, but continued to talk spasmodically. One side of her personality thought like a man. She had a logical brain of enormous range, she could employ the vocabulary of a philologist, and she spoke in quick clipped phrases, but once, on that short climb to the restaurant, she seemed to lose her way among the words. It was as if the normal division of man and woman in any human being, had been intensified in her. She was strong minded, glass-clear, vigorous in exposition, until something came up from the depths to throw a cloak of feminine softness and suddenly she spoke the language of essence and being. Perhaps her plunge into the feminine psyche in *Pilgrimage* was brilliant because she was able to bring male precision into female subtleties. Or perhaps the clouds drifting in were the beginnings of those painful mental confusions which later made it difficult to penetrate the world of delusions in which she sometimes came to live.

I can see her now on that cold windy day, sturdily breasting the hill with the coat buttoned up to her chin, a stick digging deeply at the road, exuding a determination to dominate whatever old age brought against her, and occasionally uttering a sentence short from concealed breathlessness and mental discipline. We ate a commonplace lunch, drank water and I felt her watching the person who had come all the way from London to the extremity of Cornwall to talk with what she referred to as 'a servantless old crank approaching her seventy-eighth year'. Twice I found myself looking into her large eyes and if they remained expressionless, I had the impression that insights of a very special kind were powerfully at work.

Over atrocious coffee we spoke of the stream of consciousness novel, and for the first time there were intervals when her eyes became absent and she was no longer there. They were few on that first day, but I was very conscious of a person living a life of self-imposed isolation, withdrawing into the deeper places of consciousness where she was accustomed to spend so much of her time. Abruptly she came out of her reverie and said, 'Stream of consciousness is a muddle-headed phrase. It's not a stream, it's a pool, a sea, an ocean. It has depth and greater depth and when you think you have reached its bottom there is nothing there, and when you give yourself up to one current you are suddenly possessed by another.'

What prompted her to write *Pilgrimage*, I asked. It was, she said, '... an attempt to find a feminine equivalent of the masculine realism of people like Balzac, Bennett and Wells. I began it in 1913 and quickly got the sense that I was on a fresh pathway—a most ex-

hilarating sense. But as excitement and the size of the book grew, the chances of publication diminished. It looked as if it was going to be too long and too complicated. I had not read Proust but of course I knew Henry James. I had serious qualifications about Henry James. However, he was a pioneer in the kind of novel I wanted to write.'

We spoke of the lack of punctuation in the early volumes of *Pilgrimage*. 'A mistake,' she said. 'I felt later like apologizing to my readers. A reputation for creating unnecessary difficulties is very difficult to live down.' Her readers were still limited in number she thought and when I quoted Coleridge—'Every original writer must create the taste by which he is appreciated'—she said nothing, but conveyed the impression that she would not commit herself to any such claim. Immediately lunch was over she insisted on paying for her own, and strode off with considerable vigour.

We met again in her study for tea. Suddenly she told me the ritual of the parallel chairs. Marriage, she said, was endangered by that 'iron confrontation' which placed the wife sitting opposite the husband year in, year out. Every possible device to escape that kind of continual proximity which could, in the long run, choke, had to be employed. As we sat down alongside each other, I noticed that she was smoking more—almost chain smoking.

We spoke again of *Pilgrimage*. Spelling out minutiae moment by moment, she said, might become an artistic interference with the natural condensation which made everyday life tolerable. The worst agonies of selfconsciousness were overwhelmed in everyday life by the compression of external events. The experienced moment slipped by. One could not hold on to and enlarge the moment *as it actually happened*. To represent life, it seemed as though the artist must reconcile these two elements as they were reconciled in life, but it 'left one balanced on a perilous decision'.

To take a single second, subject it to microscopic inquisition, and peer at the wonderful organisms undetected by the normal eye, was to see the nuance, the tendril, the amoeba, the very stuff of creative life, but life had movement, and an appalling confusion of speeds were intrinsically part of the moment itself. Striking the perfect balance between movement and minutiae was impossible. Echoes must pass from one to the other, detail must be implicit in movement, and the sudden deep plunge had to occur out of time with the illusion of remaining in it. Sub-aqueous depths could become too fascinating. One remained too long probing in the hope that one day, some inner pattern of psychic significance would at last fuse in the imagination.

Strong psychic elements were presently clear in her make-up. She

as capable of experiencing curious premonitions, states of heightened perception when places forbidden to the normal senses seemed suddenly luminous to her. She talked at length of the mystery of time in which the dead were no longer dead and of that very special exhilaration which came from experience remembered, controlled and recaptured more vividly than was possible with the distracted present. She had known it sometimes writing *Pilgrimage*. But she was very different from Proust. Dorothy Richardson conveyed what she regarded as a mystical element in women which transformed reality and experience in a manner unrealized in Proust's work. She underwent similar struggles with style, and occasional passages had a cathedral complexity, but her approach to writing varied according to mood. A phrase, a scene, a name, might be the symbol to concentrate her powers. From it related images multiplied, people began to talk and think aloud, a whole world came into focus, and with it, the exaltation of escaping from time. It was a heightened world: words were more potent, colours more vivid, wraiths invested with a different reality. There were many fusions, many imaginative triggers, but sometimes she stepped down effortlessly from one world to another. She would feel herself surrendering to the consciousness of what seemed to be another person, to look out on that brilliant world, awaiting the final metempsychosis . . . until all signs of selfconsciousness vanished and she was no longer herself; and then disconcertingly, it seemed to her that this other world had identities with a buried self dimly apprehended in states of reverie. Her plunge had become a plunge into her own unconscious. But once surrendered she could move freely in the mysterious pools of the feminine psyche and as she moved, write.

Coming to the end of a description which, in the original, was fascinating, her voice dropped, and she spoke suddenly of extra-sensory perception. Then she said, 'There must be something else. *There must be.*' Only later did I realize that she meant something beyond death.

The next morning I found her sitting at the small table where she worked—in fact a kitchen table—looking out as people passed, and I discovered that introspection had not destroyed her love of people. In the evening of the same day she fell into a reverie so deep that she came back to everyday consciousness with some surprise to find me there. Twice she spoke of a kind of 'spiritualism' which was too intelligent to suffer association with the word. (There were books in her library which bore out this preoccupation.) A hint of pain came back into her eyes on both occasions. She remembered her husband very vividly. He was still, in some senses, a living

presence for her, and she implied that she had attempted—was ill to communicate and with what had she tried to communicate. Each time she came to the brink of definition and withdrew again. And then the phrase was repeated: 'There must be something else—'. Tortured conflict between a brilliant logical brain resisting psychiatric temptations to detect, in the apparent nothingness, signs of a still loved person, was quickly masked by a sudden access of authority: a return to the masculine woman with the formidable intellect.

On the second day we spoke of the relative powers of insight into character of the novelist, the psychologist and sociologist. It arose from Wells's belief that science, in the long run, would give a more precise picture of human nature than the novelist. We spoke of superficial resemblances between the work of the scientist and the novelist. Both observed and recorded their phenomena, both selected fragments for experiment, both made imaginative leaps and checked back the result with reality; the scientist in actual physical fact, the novelist in terms of verisimilitude.

The one characteristic where resemblance became identity, she believed, was with the imaginative leap. In both worlds, imagination played the paramount part, and it was impossible to say whether one was of a higher order than another. If the scientist primarily occupied himself with 'taking physical matter to bits and persuading it to behave abominably or reasonably', the novelist used quite different 'material' in the human personality, but the psychologist and biologist also dealt with human beings. The biologist she felt 'would never really find the nature of personality in the endocrine glands' because the combined assaults of environment, thought and other indefinable elements, qualified endocrinology out of all recognition. 'If a biologist came to me with a perfect blueprint of the brain and demonstrated that by stimulating this or that lobe he could induce a requisite experience, I should ask him where consciousness occurred in his diagram, and would he please define it for me.'

On the third day she seemed tired and a new restlessness was apparent behind the strong lines of the face. She sat in her study with her legs apart, her hands on her thighs and her body leaning forward to concentrate the full power of her personality.

On the last night it was almost as if she did not want me to go. She spoke strangely. As it grew late, she put on her shawl, drew it closely round her and took a few preliminary steps in her pacing.

I left at 11 o'clock. A powerful temptation assailed me to slip back and look into the window again. But it seemed to me that in whatever sacrilege might consist, this would come close to it.

The Death of Socrates

With this, his first published poem, A. E. Housman won the Poetry Prize at Bromsgrove School, Worcestershire, in 1874, at the age of 15. It was printed in the local press, but has never appeared since.



Though thou art free no more, though every trace
Of life has faded from thy marble face,
Though all thy gods are fled, and silence reigns
For ever in thy desecrated fanes,
Though all that once were thine—the fair, the brave—
Are sleeping in the darkness of the grave,
Though all the light that lit thy dawn has set—
Greece, in thy ruin thou art lovely yet.
Still from thy heights the city of the free
Looks down upon her ancient slave—the sea,
Still on thy hills the olive and the vine
Their leafy branches love to intertwine,
Still in the shadow of thy flowery vales
Ceaselessly sing the mournful nightingales,
And round thy shattered altars every tread
Awakes the voices of the deathless dead.
Still thou art lovely, lovely in decay,
With purple hill and rippling azure bay,
And ocean girdling all thy shores with light,
And temples on thy headlands flashing white.
But ah! how changed from what thou wast of yore,
When conquest waved her banners on that shore,
When those blue hills, now sunk in long, long sleep,
Arose like sentinels above the deep;
When myriad navies carried in their train
The terrors of thy arms from main to main,
And glorious freedom beamed upon that brow,
So soiled, so riven, and so wasted now.

But though thy empire in the dust lies dead,
 And strength and courage from thy land have fled,
 The shades of those who made thee great and fair
 Throng every breeze that stirs thy sunny air;
 'Twas here the brave three hundred strove so well,
 'Twas here Epaminondas fought and fell,
 'Twas here that Homer's hymns of battle rang,
 'Twas here 'neath Phidias' hand those temples sprang,
 'Twas here, where yonder columns front the sea,
 That Wisdom lingered, Socrates, with thee.
 Best of the Grecians, seeking to explore
 The realms that never had been searched before,
 From which the bravest shrank with bated breath —
 The great unknown that follows after death.
 Men spoke of plains where happy spirits dwell
 Amidst the dreamy fields of Asphodel,
 Yet little did they love from life to flee
 Into the depths of what they could not see.
 They laughed on earth, they banished toil and care,
 They loved the sea, the sky, the summer air;
 And ere the smiles had faded from their lips
 They passed away into the long eclipse,
 Like voices on the wandering breezes blown
 Now here — now gone — but whither, all unknown.

What wonder then, that men like these should prize
 Lightly, the solemn accents of the wise?
 What wonder they should turn away and jeer,
 And little care his searching words to hear?
 What wonder they should better love delight
 Than listening to him as he taught the right?
 But why should they, for shame, for pity, why?
 Condemn the good, the innocent to die?
 Yet it is done. The hour is come at last
 When all his life of virtue must be past;
 At last the chilly hemlock bowl he drains,
 The subtle poison shivers through his veins.
 His wife clings to him for her last embrace,
 His sad disciples watch his shrouded face;
 Though death and he are met in deadly strife
 Still he speaks on, and still he speaks of life, —
 Of endless life, of life beyond the tomb,
 Where Socrates, emerged from earthly gloom —

THE DEATH OF SOCRATES

A new-born soul with wings of thought unfurled,
Shall find the threshold of another world.

The sun sinks down into the crimson deep,
The daylight fades away from shore and steep,
The darkening shadows sweep from height to height;
Sudden and swift and silent through the night,
The glories of the unveiled heaven stand bare—
A thousand stars gleam out upon the air.
Far, far away in space, and from each one
Streams glory that makes dark the glorious sun,
For as that sun into the deep descends,
O Socrates, thy mortal being ends.
As yon clear stars shine forth from sky and sea,
There dawns another, brighter life for thee
Where heaven its everlasting fields unfolds,
And streams of knowledge in its valleys holds,
Where melody of joy to earth unknown,
And never-dying gladness is thine own:
Worlds which the flash of daylight can obscure,
(And yet are ever there, serene and pure,)
When day has vanished first appear; how far
More vast, more wonderful than day they are!
And so, a life more wondrous far than this:
A life of unimaginable bliss
Is veiled, till death from off the mortal eye
Has drawn the cloud that covers immortality.

Thy weeping followers on the earth stand dumb
With sorrow; unto them no dawn has come,
On them no lifted veil has shed the light;
With lisping thought, and visionary sight,
They wait in twilight. But the day shall be
When a frail bark shall bear across the sea
One, in the wisdom of whose solemn eyes
A deeper, clearer well of light shall rise,
And on the hill thy feet so oft have trod,
He shall in fulness preach thine Unknown God.

The Tunnel

Translated from the German by H. M. Waidson



A twenty-four-year-old man, who was fat so that the horror behind the scenes which he could see (that was his gift, perhaps his only one) should not come up too close to him, who liked to stop up the holes in his flesh, as it was precisely through them that what was monstrous could flood in, so that he smoked cigars (Ormond-Brazil No 10) and wore a second pair of glasses over the top of a first pair, and sun-glasses, and cotton wool in his ears: this young man, who was still dependent on his parents and engaged on some nebulous studies at a university which was two hours away by rail, got into the usual train one Sunday afternoon, depart 5.50 p.m., arrive 7.27 p.m., in order to go to a seminar the next day which he was already determined to cut.

The sun was shining from a cloudless sky as he left his hometown. It was summer. In this pleasant weather the train had to make its way between the Alps and the Jura, past prosperous villages and small towns, then by the side of a river, and then again after not quite twenty minutes' travelling, just beyond Burgdorf, it dived into a little tunnel. The train was crowded. The twenty-four-year-old had got in in front and had worked his way painfully towards the rear, sweating and making a slightly silly impression. The passengers sat close together, many of them on their cases, the second-class carriages were full too, only the first-class was fairly empty. After the young man had at last fought his way through the confusion of families, national-service men, students and loving couples, falling, as he was jolted this way and that by the train, now against this person and now against that, staggering against bellies and breasts, he found a seat in the very last carriage, found so much room indeed, that he had a whole seat to himself in this third-class compartment (in thirds, separate compartments are usually difficult to find): in the enclosed space someone was sitting opposite him who was even fatter than he

THE TUNNEL

was, playing chess with himself, and in the corner on the same side, near the corridor, was a red-haired girl who was reading a novel. So he was already sitting by the window and had just put up an Ormond-Brazil No 10, when the tunnel came, and it seemed to last longer than usual. He had already travelled along this stretch a good number of times, almost every Saturday and Sunday during the last year, and had actually never paid any attention to the tunnel, but had only been vaguely aware of it. It was true that he had intended several times to give it his full attention, but whenever he had come, he had thought of something else each time, so that he had not been aware of the short dive into the darkness, for the tunnel was always just past whenever he looked up intending to notice it. The train went through it so quickly and the tunnel was so short. And so even now he had not taken his sun-glasses off when they went in, as he wasn't thinking of the tunnel. The sun had just been shining with full power, and the countryside they were travelling through, the hills and woods, the distant chain of the Jura and the houses of the little town had been like gold, for everything had gleamed in the evening light, so intensely that he became conscious of the sudden onset of darkness in the tunnel, which was no doubt the reason too why it seemed to take longer to go through than he had thought. It was completely dark in the compartment, as the lights had not been put on because of the shortness of the tunnel, for with every second that passed the first pale shimmer of daylight must show itself in the window and break violently through with full, golden brightness; but as it still stayed dark, he took his sun-glasses off.

At that moment the girl lit a cigarette, obviously annoyed that she could not go on reading her novel, as he thought he could observe when her match flared up with reddish light; his wrist-watch with its luminous dial said ten past six. He leaned back in the corner between the partition-wall and the window and busied himself with his confused studies, which nobody really believed in as far as he was concerned, with the seminar-class that he had to go to tomorrow and which he would miss (everything that he did was only an excuse to achieve order behind the façade of his activity, not order itself, only a semblance of order, in face of the terror that he was upholstering himself against with fat, by sticking cigars into his mouth and cotton-wool into his ears), and as he looked once more at his watch it was a quarter past six and they were still in the tunnel. That put him out. True enough, the lights were now on, the compartment became bright, the red-haired

girl could go on reading her novel and the fat man was again playing chess with himself, but outside, the other side of the window-pane, in which the whole compartment was now reflected, the tunnel was still there. He stepped into the corridor where a tall man in a light-coloured raincoat was walking up and down with a black scarf round his neck. What's the point in weather like this, he thought, and looked into the other compartments of the coach where people were reading newspapers and chatting. He went back to his corner-seat and sat down, the tunnel must end now every minute, every second; his wrist-watch now said almost twenty past six; he was annoyed that he had paid so little attention to the tunnel before, after all, it had already lasted a quarter of an hour and must be an important tunnel, one of the longest in Switzerland, when you took into account the speed at which the train was going. It was thus probable that he had got in the wrong train, even if he could not for the moment recall that there was such a long and considerable tunnel twenty minutes' train-journey from his home-town. He therefore asked the fat chess-player whether the train was going to Zürich, and the latter confirmed this. He didn't know that there was such a long tunnel on this section of the route, the young man said, but the chess-player answered, somewhat irritably, since he was being interrupted for the second time in some difficult calculation, that there were a lot of tunnels in Switzerland, an extraordinary number, admittedly it was his first visit to this country, but it struck you straight away, what was more, he had read in a statistics' annual that there was no country that had so many tunnels as Switzerland. He really would have to excuse him now, he was terribly sorry, as he was busy with an important problem of the Nimzovitch defence and mustn't be interrupted any more. The chess-player had replied politely, but definitely; the young man saw that he would get no answer from him. He was convinced that his ticket would not be accepted; even when the ticket-collector, a pale, lean man, observed to the girl opposite, whose ticket he took first, nervously, or so it seemed, that she must change at Olten, the twenty-four-year-old did not completely give up hope, so very sure was he that he had got into the wrong train. He assumed he would have to pay excess, he was supposed to be going to Zürich, he then said, without taking the Ormond-Brazil No 10 out of his mouth, and handed the ticket to the ticket-collector. 'You are in the right train, sir,' the latter answered, after examining the ticket. 'But we are going through a tunnel!' the young man exclaimed irritably and quite forcibly, determined now that he would clear

up the confusing situation. 'We have just passed Herzogenbuchsee and are approaching Langenthal,' the guard said. 'Quite right, sir, it's now twenty past six.' 'But we have been in a tunnel for twenty minutes,' the young man insisted on his position. The ticket-collector looked at him blankly. 'It is the train to Zürich,' he said, and now also looked out of the window. 'Twenty past six,' he said again, now somewhat disturbed, apparently. 'Olten will be here soon, arrive 6.37 p.m. The weather must suddenly have got bad, quite suddenly, that's why it is dark, perhaps a storm, yes, that must be it.' 'Nonsense,' the man who was busy with a problem of the Nimzovitch defence now intervened, annoyed because he was still holding out his ticket without being noticed by the ticket-collector. 'Nonsense, we're travelling through a tunnel. You can see the rock quite clearly, granite apparently. There are more tunnels in Switzerland than anywhere else in the world. I read it in a statistics' annual.' The guard, finally taking the chess-player's ticket, once more assured him, almost pleadingly, that the train was going to Zürich, at which the twenty-four-year-old asked to see the guard. He was at the front end of the train, the ticket-collector said, anyway, the train was going to Zürich, it was 6.25 now, and in twelve minutes by the summer timetable they would be stopping in Olten, he went on this train three times a week.

The young man started moving. He found it even more difficult to walk in the crowded train than he had done a little while earlier, when he had made the journey in the reverse direction; the train must be moving extremely fast; also, the row that it was making by doing so was shocking; so he fixed his cotton-wool in his ears again, after he had taken it out on entering the train. The people he passed were keeping quiet, the train was no different from any other trains that he had travelled by on Sunday afternoons, and he did not notice anyone who was ill at ease. An Englishman was standing at the corridor window of a second-class carriage and was tapping happily against the window-pane with his pipe, which he was smoking. 'The Simplon,' he said. In the restaurant car too everything was as usual, although there were no vacant seats, and surely one of the passengers or one of the waiters who were serving Wienerschnitzel with rice might have been struck by the tunnel. The young man found the guard, whom he recognized by his red pouch, at the door at the far end of the restaurant car. 'What can I do for you?' the guard asked, a big, quiet man with a carefully tended moustache and rimless glasses. 'We've been in a tunnel for twenty-five minutes,' the young man said. The guard did not look towards the window, as the twenty-four-year-old had

expected, but turned to the waiter. 'Give me a packet of Ormondo No 10,' he said, 'I smoke the same brand as this gentleman'; but the waiter could not oblige him, as he did not have this type of cigar, so that the young man, glad to have a point of contact, offered the guard a Brazil. 'Thank you,' the latter said, 'I shall hardly have time to get myself one in Olten, and so you're doing me a great favour. Smoking is important. May I now ask you to follow me?' He led the twenty-four-year-old into the luggage-van, which was in front of the restaurant car. 'After that comes the engine,' the guard said, as they entered the luggage-van, 'We are at the front of the train.' In the van a weak, yellow light was burning, the greater part of the carriage was in obscurity, the doors at the side were locked, and the darkness of the tunnel only penetrated through a small window-grating. Trunks lay around, many of them with hotel labels on, some bicycles and a pram. The guard hung his red pouch on to a hook. 'What can I do for you?' he asked once more, though he did not look at the young man, but began to fill up tables in a notebook that he had taken out of the pouch. 'Ever since Burgdorf we have been in a tunnel,' the twenty-four-year-old said decisively, 'there is no such big tunnel on this stretch of the line, I go on it, there and back, every week, I know the route.' The guard went on writing. 'Sir,' he said at last and stepped up close to the young man, so close that their two bodies almost touched, 'sir, there's not much I can tell you. How we got into this tunnel, I don't know, I can give no explanation of it. But I beg you to consider that we are moving on lines, and so the tunnel must go somewhere. There's no proof that there is anything wrong with the tunnel, apart from the fact, naturally, that it just goes on.' The guard, with the still unlit Ormond-Brazil between his lips, had spoken extremely quietly, but with such great dignity and so clearly and definitely, that his words were audible, although in the luggage-van the noise of the train was much louder than in the restaurant car. 'Then may I ask you to stop the train,' the young man said impatiently. 'I can't understand a word you're saying. If there's something wrong with this tunnel, whose existence you yourself can't explain, you should stop the train.' 'Stop the train?' the other man replied slowly, certainly, he too had thought of that, and then he closed the notebook and put it back in the red pouch which was swaying to and fro from its hook, then he lit his Ormond carefully. Should he pull the emergency brake, the young man asked, and made to stretch his hand towards the brake mechanism above his head, but staggered forwards at the same moment and crashed against the side of the carriage.

A pram rolled towards him, and trunks slid along; the guard too came through the luggage-van, swaying strangely with outstretched hands. 'We're going down,' the guard said, and leaned by the side of the twenty-four-year-old against the front wall of the carriage, but the anticipated crash of the hurtling train against the rock, the smashing up and kaleidoscoping together of the carriages, did not follow, it seemed rather as if the tunnel was running smoothly again. At the other end of the coach the door opened. In the glaring light of the restaurant car you could see people drinking to one another's health, and then the door was shut again. 'Come on to the engine,' the guard said, and looked the twenty-four-year-old thoughtfully and, as it suddenly seemed, curiously threateningly in the face, then he opened the door next to which they were leaning against the wall: however, a hot, storm-like stream of air beat against them so strongly that the force of the hurricane forced them to stagger back against the wall; at the same time a terrible noise filled the luggage-van. 'We must climb over to the engine,' the guard shouted into the young man's ear, scarcely audibly this time either, and then vanished in the right angle of the open door, through which could be seen the brightly lit windows of the locomotive, which were swaying from side to side. The flat space which he stepped on to had an iron railing on either side, and he clung on to this, but what was terrifying was not the monstrous current of air, which became less fierce as he approached the engine, but the immediate proximity of the tunnel walls, which admittedly he could not see, as he had to concentrate entirely on the engine, but which he sensed, shaken through and through as he was by the stamping of the wheels and the whistling of the air, so that he felt as if he were hurtling with astronomical speed into a world of stone.

A narrow strip ran alongside the locomotive with a metal bar as a hand-rail above it which wound its way round the engine at a constant height above the strip: this must be the way; he reckoned the jump he would have to make to be just over a yard. In this way he too managed to grasp the bar. Pressed against the locomotive, he pushed himself along the strip; the way became really terrifying when he got to the long side of the engine and was now exposed to the ferocity of the raging hurricane and to the menacing rock-face which, brightly lit up by the engine, brushed up by him. The only thing that saved him was that the guard pulled him through a little door into the inside of the locomotive. The young man leaned exhausted against the engine-room, and at that it suddenly became quiet, for after the guard had shut the door,

the steel walls of the giant locomotive muffled the noise so much that it was scarcely audible any more. 'We've lost the Ormonds Brazil as well,' the guard said. 'It wasn't a good idea to light one before the scramble, but they break easily, with their longish shape, if you haven't got a box on you.' After the ominous closeness of the rock-face the young man was glad to have his mind turned to something that reminded him of the everyday normality in which he had lived not much more than half an hour ago, those self-same days and years (self-same, because he had only been living for the moment of break-through, this sudden giving way of the earth's surface, this strange fall into the earth's interior). He took one of the brown boxes out of the right-hand pocket of his coat and once more offered the guard a cigar, putting one into his own mouth as well, and they cautiously lit them from the light which the guard offered. 'I like these Ormonds very much,' the guard said, 'only you've got to draw on them hard, else they go out,' words which made the twenty-four-year-old suspicious, because he felt that the guard also did not like to think about the tunnel, which still went on outside (there was still the possibility that it could suddenly stop, just as a dream can suddenly stop). 'Six-forty,' he said, looking at the luminous dial of his watch, 'after all, we ought to be in Olten by now,' and he thought of the hills and woods which had been there only a short while ago, heaped over with gold from the setting sun. Thus they stood and smoked, leaning against the side of the engine-room. 'My name is Keller,' the guard said, puffing at his Brazil. The young man would not be put off. 'That scramble over the engine was not without danger,' he remarked, 'at least not for me, for I'm not used to that sort of thing, and that's why I should like to know what you've brought me here for.' He didn't know, answered Keller, he had only wanted to gain time to think things over. 'Time to think things over,' the twenty-four-year-old repeated. 'Yes,' the guard said, that was the way it was, and he went on smoking. Once more the engine seemed to bend over forwards. 'We might as well go into the driver's cabin,' Keller suggested, though he still remained standing indecisively against the side of the engine, at which the young man walked along the corridor. When he had opened the door to the driver's cabin, he stood still. 'It's empty,' he said to the guard, who now came along too, 'the driver's cabin is empty.' They entered the space, swaying with the enormous speed at which the engine, pulling the train along behind, went on hurtling through the tunnel. 'Excuse me,' the guard said, and pressed down some levers and also pulled the

emergency brake. The engine failed to respond. They had done everything to stop it, as soon as they had noticed the change in the route, Keller assured him, but the engine had gone rushing on all the same. 'It will just go on the same,' the twenty-four-year-old replied, and pointed to the speedometer. '94 m.p.h. Has the engine ever done 94 m.p.h. before?' 'Good heavens,' the guard said, 'it's never gone that quick, at the most seventy.' 'There you are,' the young man said. 'Its speed is increasing. Now the needle is pointing to a hundred. We are falling.' He stepped to the window, yet he could not hold himself upright, but his face was pressed up against the glass, the speed was now so unusual. 'What's happened to the driver?' he shouted, and stared at the rock masses which were rushing into the glaring light of the headlamps and were disappearing above and below him and on either side of the driver's cabin. 'Jumped off,' Keller shouted back; he was now sitting on the floor with his back against the switchboard. 'When?' the twenty-four-year-old obstinately asked. The guard hesitated a little and had to light up his Ormond again, and his legs were now at the same level as his head, as the train was inclining ever more steeply down. 'After the first five minutes,' he then said. 'It would have been senseless to try to save him. The man in the luggage-van has also jumped off.' 'What about yourself?' the twenty-four-year-old inquired. 'I'm the guard,' the other man answered, 'what is more, I have also lived without hope.' 'Without hope,' the young man replied; he now lay hidden over the window of the driver's place, his face pressed down over the abyss. 'And there we sat in our compartments and didn't know that everything was already lost,' he thought. 'Up to then nothing had changed, as it seemed to us, but already the pit had opened up to take us down into the depths, and so we are rushing madly down our abyss like the company of Korah.' The guard shouted that he must go back now, 'panic will have broken out in the coaches. Everyone will be pushing their way to the back of the train.' 'Of course,' the twenty-four-year-old answered, and thought of the fat chess-player and the girl with her novel and her red hair. He offered the guard his remaining boxes of Ormond-Brazil No 10. 'Take them,' he said, 'after all, you will lose the one you've lit while you're scrambling back.' Wasn't he coming back then, the guard asked, getting up and beginning to crawl painfully into the corridor. The young man looked at the meaningless instruments, those ridiculous levers and switches that surrounded him silvery in the bright light of the cabin. '130 m.p.h.,' he said. 'I don't believe you can manage to get back to the coaches behind at that speed.' 'It's my duty,' the

guard shouted. 'Of course,' the twenty-four-year-old replied, without turning his head to see the guard's senseless action. 'I've got to try, at least,' the guard shouted yet again, now already far up in the corridor, holding himself against the metal walls with his elbows and thighs, but as the engine rushed further downwards, hurtling in a fearful fall towards the earth's interior, that aim of all objects, so that the guard in his corridor was hanging directly above the twenty-four-year-old who was lying on the floor of the engine, on the silver window of the driver's cabin, his face looking downwards, the guard's strength failed him. He plunged headlong down on to the switchboard and landed, streaming with blood, by the young man, whose shoulders he clung to. 'What shall we do?' the guard shouted against the uproar of the tunnel walls that were rushing up at them into the ear of the twenty-four-year-old who was reclining with his fat body, which was useless now and gave no protection, motionless upon the pane of glass that separated him from the abyss, and who was drinking in through the glass the abyss into his eyes, which were now for the first time opened wide. 'What shall we do now?' 'Nothing,' the other answered pitilessly, without turning his head away from the deathly spectacle, though not without a grim cheerfulness, and he was sprinkled all over with splinters of glass from the smashed switchboard, while two lumps of cotton-wool were seized by some draught of air that now suddenly came in (a first crack was showing in the glass-pane) and swept quick as an arrow up into the vent above them. 'Nothing. God let us fall, and so we are rushing down towards Him.'

LARRY RUBIN

Two Poems



THE ADDICT

I saw him lying there—my father—with eyes
Of frosted glass, waiting for some warmth,
His eighty hours of crawling whiteness over;
Like a man who has wintered in hell, he wore his skull
As though it hung by a hollow needle of ice.

I stood, waiting, watching him within
A cold chamber of my heart. His sheets
Stretched like glaciers; one false move
Would open a crevasse, spin his skull through caves
Where all the needles cracked like stalactites.

And so I waited. For hours I gripped the rim
Of those white wastes, gazing at the precipice
As though it were my own. And then the eyes
Jerked softly, choking through the frost
To mine. I saw my father's eyes were warm.

THE SECRET

I've learned the trick of turning it off.
It used to strangle me with shapes
Of a golden octopus, sunning
His stretching tentacles. I'd lie
On the melting sand, gripped
In tight convolutions beneath
A sky like carborundum. Boa
Constrictors boiled out of the sun

LARRY RUBIN

In red ropes, pinning my arms
To sides that ran in welts like tallow,
Fusing the torso to my limbs.
(And still I strained to touch the gold—
It flowed so close to my swollen fingers.)

I know the secret now.

Beneath the layers a sly switch
Lies, empowered to uncoil.
A silent flash—then night: the sea
Flows cool, laving, dissolving
The strands of knotted wax, leaving
The lungs uncrushed, arms free
To roam that minimum twilight.
If you remember gold, reach
Slenderly: twisted skeins of burnished
Ore, sinuous ingots, glinting,
Wait. The quiet hand, questing,
Slides on smooth reflections, caresses
A sheet of dark Sidonian glass.

DOM MORAES

The Forked Island

'No Man is an Island'



I

A child, I lived in Bombay. It is the chief city of Western India. It squats on a forked island washed by the Arabian Sea. The sewers of Bombay disgorge into the sea, and the smoke of its factory chimneys rises a long way, so that the passengers on P. & O. liners are aware of their arrival at the city before they have actually seen it. I lived in a flat quite close to the sea—a five-minute walk—but also in the centre of the city. My father was a journalist and my mother was a doctor.

Because my parents were professional people, and also because I hated and was afraid of other children, I lived by myself a great deal until I was about ten. Our flat overlooked a park where I used to spend a great deal of the day, either by myself or with my nanny. I didn't do much, just rooted about under the coconut trees that ringed the park. In the evenings, when other children arrived with their nannies, I used to go home and get the driver to take me somewhere in my father's car: to the beach about fifteen miles away, or to some other quieter park. I never did very much, and the only feelings I can remember from that time are a general sense of nervousness and timidity whenever I saw other children or a great many people together, and a desire to be sheltered, either to be with my parents or alone in a safe place. I loved my parents very much. I needed them very much. The times when I was saddest were when they were angry with me.

So now it surprises me that although my emotional needs were the strongest things in my life, what I remember most is not them. Because I think I was unaware then how awake my eyes were. When I went to the park, when the driver drove me to the beach, my eyes walked about, my eyes thought and felt. My eyes invented Bombay for me. They saw the city, its factory

chimneys with smoke clinging round them like wet cloth, the flooding sewers of the slums and the crooked houses where the poor lived ten to a room. They put the city into my head, the city that exists for me now and is everywhere about me. The stones I see today, the tree and the man, those stones are the stones of Bombay whose weight I tested with my eyes, whose grains chinked together when my foot pressed them. The tree that grows in my eye now is the splayed coconut tree; paintbrush that daubed the sky at evening with shadowy green. The man is the man that my eyes stuck together in India; dummy with no purpose but suffering.

Looking back to my childhood therefore, what I can mostly remember is the atmosphere of objects. However, I can also remember two actual incidents and the remembering interests me, because I think they show the beginning of a pattern in my life.

The first incident is connected with my nanny. Like my family, she was a convert to Roman Catholicism, and unlike my father, she was devout, she believed. She told me about hell. Hell was a place where three goddesses lived, Kali the devourer with her necklace of skulls, dancing violently in the flames; Mariam the mistress of Satan; and a third one, a snake-goddess. All three came out of hell at night. Slowly they walked through the streets of Bombay, looking at everything, saying nothing. I must never go out at night, my nanny said, looking urgently into my eyes with her dark young eyes. I must stay in bed in my room. She had a lover in the evenings and my father eventually had to pay a hospital bill.

My nanny liked to take me walking, always in the afternoon, and one afternoon we were walking along a boulevard by the sea. It was quiet and sunny, and far away we could see the harbour where three ships of the Royal Navy had just put in. My nanny was talking to me: an undistracted voice, and close by the sea was mumbling on the rocks. Suddenly there was a low booming explosion: a flash of white light: a pane of glass in a window above us shivered forward into the street. The fragments lay on the pavement around. Another dull explosion, and a great smear of red light crossed the sky, then thick black smoke, and a succession of crimson flashes. My nanny fell to her knees in the street, under the impression that the end of the world was with us. She wept, she prayed and wept. But I stood still and looked at the sky. Suddenly I saw them standing up among the red flashes and the smoke-smears: Kali, Mariam, the snake-goddess, inscrutable and destroying. I was very frightened and wanted to

go home, but my nanny wouldn't budge; she preferred to meet her Maker, if she had to, kneeling down. Eventually my father drove up in the car, put us into it, and drove us rapidly home. Every few minutes there was the shudder of an explosion, and red flashes in the sky. My father explained that one of the oil-tankers in the harbour had blown up. He made me feel safe again, but I didn't believe him. For when he had dashed off to the newspaper office, and my mother to the docks to help the injured, I stood on the verandah, listening to the repeated explosions, watching the flashes in the sky. Kali's foot came down in her dance, and there was thunder: Mariam beat the clouds with her hands, and lightning flashed: and from the arms of the third goddess fell snakes of fire, snakes that fell squirming into the street, blackened and became bodies of the injured. When my parents came back, I retailed this to them, and nothing they could say would shake me. What I had seen I had seen. Today I do not believe that three goddesses actually did do a waltz over Bombay that afternoon. But I like telling this story to people whom I think will be impressed. When I do so I am able to convince myself by a sort of pictorial process of the imagination, that in fact it was so.

When I went for walks with my mother in the early mornings or in the late evenings, I always saw beggars on the pavements. At the times when my mother was free enough from her work to take me walking they were either just going to sleep or just getting up. A white sheet completely covered each body, and they lay head to foot in a long line like a low uneven hedge, through which continual small movements passed: warm shudders, humpings. I would always ask my mother what these objects were: she would answer, 'Nothing.' So by some peculiar process of logic I came to believe that they were in fact plants: a kind of white lumpy sack-plant that grew from the stone of pavements with a brief blooming time, gone when the sun came out. This was when I was five or six. Later, in my adolescence, I felt such powerful sensations of pity and horror when I passed by the lines of sleeping beggars, that it was a kind of dying: a withering of myself. It was impossible for me to pass by without ending literally in tears. But I found that if I imagined that they were plants, I was easily able to convince myself. I could walk past indifferently, like someone in a rose-garden, even brushing the heavy-headed flowers with my leg as I went by. They never stirred.

Would they stir, would they ask me questions, the beggars? I often wonder now. If I were to go back, I would do the same thing again. But wouldn't they stir, shake off their shrouds and

get up? wouldn't they say, 'We aren't ghosts, we aren't the dream in your head, nor the hyacinths you have seen in English gardens, since you left us last, we are not cornflower nor crocus. Recognize us?' And my guilt would be less if they did.

I think that now. I think my childhood throws a bridge across to my growing up. Adolescence was an interval between these two confrontations for me. My childhood ended when I went with my father on a tour of Australia and New Zealand, and later of South-East Asia. During that period of eight months or so, I went with him to the battle-front in Indo-China. Soldiers were being carried back in trucks and on stretchers along a narrow road beyond Haiphong. They looked dirty: the brown blood had a peculiar grimy look on their green battledresses. And my eyes, though they travelled, did not only take the photographs they had taken when I was a child—photographs which I had not valued and had put aside and now remember. My eyes looked, and my head said, 'How frightened you feel by the look of all this don't you, silly boy. And you don't like the smell, do you?' And I took the first step ever towards writing a poem, I stopped being a child, I became adolescent. That particular scene is no longer sharp for me, or precise, but I remember it because I became aware then that I had outgrown my childhood.

Another result of my adolescence was an extraordinary interest in sex. Anything at all, an advertisement of brassieres, or even thinking about girls, led to a deluge of excitement and frustration. But I knew no girls who were at all accessible. Curiously enough, I had no homosexual leanings. But again, my pursuit of excitation, or possibly excitation's pursuit of me, was pure, in that I sought pure sensation, there weren't any complications. I had no friends of my own age. My friends were therefore made among my father's friends. Since I tried my best to cut myself off from my father's ideas, and most of his friends shared his ideas, I had nobody to get any new ideas from. My father being anti-communist, therefore, I became violently communist, and said the most revolutionary things I could think of. Also I wrote poems every day modelled on the Marxist poems of Spender and Day Lewis.

This lasted from the time when I was fourteen till I was about sixteen. I began to find out hereabouts what I wanted to write about. Some of the poems I wrote at this time are included in my first book. They are mostly about the dry, friable earth of an unpopulated place: a deserted Buddhist monastery, a landscape where a piper sat asking children to pretend they were dead. I began to discover things I had seen. I did not at that time remember

when I had seen them.

Also at this time I had my first sexual experience, with a woman friend of my father's. It must have been a ridiculous scene I think: myself puffing with disbelief, wondering if more was expected of me, trying to feel like a man, trouserless on the sofa on which her naked and surprising body lay. In the end it did make me feel vaguely manly: also I had a feeling that the experience was well-timed; it came just before I was due to leave for England.

But when the P. & O. liner did move out across Bombay harbour, and I saw the flagstaffs at the quayside recede and the long ridge of buildings and the blurred-by-early-morning-mist towers fade under the horizon, my eyes became awake again, as they had been when I was a child, they saw the exact quality of departure and fixed it upon my mind, they saw the stumbling and loving past, the unlearnt lessons, and being eyes and awake, they wept.

II

I landed in England on September 2, 1955. It was very fine weather I remember. I was met at King's Cross by the correspondent of my father's newspaper, who told me that I was to live in a small flat in Knightsbridge and study Latin with a crammer in Holland Park with a view to passing the entrance examination into Oxford University.

My days became very desultory outside the four or five boring hours spent with my Latin. I used to walk great distances without any real aim, walk back again, go into pubs and have a drink, feeling grown-up, then dine inexpensively before letting myself into my little flat again. I knew nobody in London apart from my father's correspondent, who was often busy, and an English writer, who was away in America. I did not write very much and became acutely nervous, so much so that the look of the Round Pond or the Oratory, reminding me of things I had seen with my father or with a friend, could reduce me to public tears. It was the most unnerving six months I have ever spent.

During these six months I noticed certain things in myself. My adolescence had given me no ideas, in the sense that I had never listened to my father's, and had no real ones of my own, politically or socially speaking. All that my reading had given me was images. Even when I read philosophy I found that images of the writer rose to my mind or an image of great stone gods with faces of crumpled linen, his theories sitting in a row. Therefore as I began to know people with whom I was able to talk, I found I couldn't discuss ideas at all.

Furthermore, since the reality around me repelled me more and more, I resorted to fantasy whenever I had to describe it, as in letters to my parents or friends. Out of this came a total inability to distinguish between the actual world and the world of my fantasy. There were times when I was not quite sure which I was in. This disseminated so that I became incapable of having reactions to things in the real world. Moreover, being unsure of my fantasy world, I could react to nothing in that either. For some months I became all copper and gristle, incapable of writing. I developed two habits very assiduously and gently, just to keep myself occupied. I began to drink very heavily, alone, trying out different sorts of liquor on myself to test their effect. There were terrible incidents of passing out on the Underground, being carried in the dark for miles past one's destination, collapsing at last into cold benches of heartless suburban stations: long colloquies with myself, hours spent listening to my own voice talking; invention of Rimbaud as drinking-companion, colloquies with Rimbaud in the Bunch of Grapes or the Old Swan. In the end I even drank in the mornings, first thing after getting up, from a bottle of red wine. In a peculiar way this gave me back the power of poetry. It restored one aspect of reality to me: the sense of my own indignity. I used this in many poems. At last I began to be aware of something as I had always been aware of things before I came to England. I began to realize that in order to write the kind of poetry I most longed to write I would have to recover something else: the sense of my own dignity.

The second habit I fell into was one of fantasy. Whereas before I could believe that beggars were plants if I imagined it to myself strongly enough, now feeling that it would be picturesque to believe that the Underground was the inside of a giant cowhorn, I said that I believed it was. From this I came into the habit of making fantasy out of ordinary gossip. This was also one way of avoiding the need to discuss ideas. If one could only say something beautiful, complicated and untrue, it would distract the others from their ideas and make them listen.

In spite of gardening away at these two habits, I passed my entrance examinations and was admitted into Jesus College, Oxford. Term didn't begin till October 1956, so in the New Year I left for the Continent. I spent six months travelling through France, Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia. I was entirely alone. Most of the time I was very happy. I wrote almost all day long; on iron tables of cafés, in hotel bedrooms, everywhere. I met very few people who spoke English and my French and Italian weren't good enough for

THE FORKED ISLAND

me to fantasy much. I drank less, and also it was mostly wine, and I never got drunk. When I came back to England, I was feeling very calm, very settled, yet at the same time I felt that I must make myself a receptacle for new experience. Through Stephen Spender I met some of the younger English poets, and with them I found my way to the three parallel streets of Soho, criss-crossed with roadways where club-signs hang. At night all Soho came alive, like a warm grubby animal, holding one close, lulling one with pub warmth and club music, wedging one into the conversational beehive pushing away reality. This was exactly what I had been trying to avoid, the escape mechanisms of neurosis, yet I plunged myself happily into Soho, and again stopped writing. Then in October I went up to Oxford.

At the time of writing I am in my second year here. It is summer, a sunny day, and the street is quiet. All day the large and gentle chairs have stayed in the places, nothing has moved or changed. I am alone with the person I was and with myself. They recognize each other and frown hard, looking for differences. I can tell some of the differences. But the problems of one remain the problems of the other.

The Cave of the Nymphs



Hushed, haunted the cave—a gathering point
For time and eternity. One entrance
For men, subject to death,
One, open to the sky,
For the Undying. In this place,
Where the quiet nymphs weave purple cloth,
And hive the learned bees—archetypes,
Images, symbols.

But Ulysses,
Ulysses of the many stratagems,
Was unaware of this. He shook himself (grandson
Of Autolycus, the wolf-man) suddenly awake
Like a great canine. He rubbed the salt from his eyes,
Dismissing the images of night and journeying:
The snatching horror, the sucking whirlpool,
Canticle of the death-birds,
Possessive and beast-attended
Goddesses, the geometrical gardens.
He knew where he was. The landscape
Was not the deceptive pastoral simplicity
Of the cannibal's island, and not
The hothouse vegetation of Lotos-land,
Nor spruce and silver-birch
Of the Laestryones' fjord. It was limestone;
It was tamarisks; it was olives
And vine-stocks gnawed by goats.
It was Ithaca at last. And was dangerous.

Therefore, out in the sunlight,
Meeting a shepherd-boy,
He started once more to lie—

THE CAVE OF THE NYMPHS

It was almost routine with him now—
Improvising a cover-story. But with so much blague,
And such a ready tongue,
He began to enjoy it. And that other,
Knowing it would all come out,
Could not refrain from revealing herself—
The goddess who was on his side—
And chaffed him too. So they stood there,
The man and the Immortal, like a pair of friends
Who understand each other
Too well to talk much.

And as he turned to go
She still smiled after him. But if
The perdurable and inviolate heart
Of immortal Wisdom might grieve, it ached then
For what it could never know:
For not to know death is to know nothing
Of the wonder of deliverance; and to be free
Of the wide aether, and the white peaks of Olympus,
And all the bounds of the world and the backward-
flowing Ocean,
Is never to know and love
One patch of earth as home.

But Ulysses,
Ulysses who had made a good journey,
Was unaware of this. He had gone to look for
A wife he had not met
For twenty years, and a son
Who must now be a stranger to him.
For he had come home;
Which is the whole point of the story.

The Retreat



Here in this room, the very top of the tower,
I live a little. On these checkered walls
Some past is written and some ancient power
Is whispered in those finger-marks and scrawls—
Childhood or family history or war?
Or were the things inventions, always false?

One window, steep enough to hold the sky,
Holds the sea too; today the water's calm,
The cumbered breakers have smoothed out and lie
As if no ripple cut across their firm
And balanced movement. Meanwhile, slowly I
Sit meditating, head upon my arm.

Silence is spread for me and no one knows
That I am here; no one can point and say
'Escaper both from failure and applause.'
The tongues of fire have not come down today
Nor the descending dove of peace. I close
My door and make my peace in my own way;

And shall be better when I climb the stairs
Downward to darkness and the still-calm sea.
Voices will snatch me and the old despairs
Return. One moment, recollectedly
I understand old silences and prayers
Yet know that something else is meant for me.

EDWARD LOWBURY

Night Train

For M.R.G.



Our eastern window finds the moon,
While, dogged in the teeth of night,
A yellow streak lights up the west;
Between the two we undergo
An alchemy of quarter-light.

At once unreal and twice as real
My fellow travellers go their ways,
Wrapped up in vacancy or thought;
Embarrassment and ugliness
No longer intercept my gaze.

The prosperous upstart, insolent
To those less certain of their goal,
Becomes a statue—shares the fate
Of Lot's wife, draws the Gorgon's eye
And, petrified, reveals a soul.

The plain girl on his right who dreamt
There was a cure, . . . that love, esteem
Could still be hers: time has rubbed in
The hard lines, but inside this light
She is the image of her dream.

The man with dull, unseeing eyes
Remained unnoticed at her side,
Till now the human shape shows up:
Startled, I look that way and see
An empty place now occupied.

How happily their calm contrasts
With what my world has made of me;
And yet this company conveys
A weird awareness that I too
Am altered by some alchemy.

Correspondence



Sir,

Mr Alan Ross, in his review (April 1959) of my book, *The Novels of Henry Green*, remarks that my 'methods go so far beyond the normal techniques of literary criticism that at the end of it all the only relevant question seems to be, was it worth it?' This is, inevitably, a question that I have also asked. I do not, of course, know the answer; I can only say that each of Henry Green's novels is so different from the rest, and yet each carries so unmistakably the imprint of his own personality, that I found myself compelled to attempt to devise special methods to define both the diversity and the pervasive individuality.

Mr Ross does, by implication, give me credit for being able to quote correctly. I regret that I cannot return the compliment. It is a little unfortunate that the only comment from my discussion of Green's 'style and syntax' which Mr Ross quotes, as being of a kind with which he can concur 'less dopily', is misquoted. I wrote: 'As far as I know only one critic has remarked on Green's "frequently exhibited control of possibly the most difficult of artistic media the *declarative* sentence".' Mr Ross converts the italicized adjective to 'declamative', which surely should have made the sentence nonsensical to a reader of Henry Green's novels, even to one bemused by 200 pages of my 'desperate and devouring curiosity'.

Hobart, Tasmania

E. Stokes

[Alan Ross replies: I apologize about the 'm' for 'r', which was a typist's error, uncorrected because I was abroad. Nevertheless, while respecting much of Mr Stokes's book, I remain unconvinced that Henry Green's novels should require quite such 'special methods' as Mr Stokes has felt compelled to devise for their elucidation.]

Sir,

Mr Osborne, in his review of *'The Observer' Plays*, echoes a current academic superstition of theatre criticism in suggesting that 'the poets of the (modern) theatre' ought to be of the type of Tennessee Williams and Cocteau, who make 'a blend of the visual, the verbal, and perhaps the musical elements'. He specifically excludes Fry, as it is now fashionable to do, on the grounds that Fry's poetry is an embellishment added to one of these elements. Although one might accept that criticism of Fry's early plays, I think the fusion of theatrical elements is perfectly achieved in such a scene as Act II of *The Dark is Light Enough*; but of course the thought is much denser, the language more precise and varied than anything found in Williams or Miller.

At the same time, one is never 'listening to poetry'; although it is as well to remember that having children singing, or frogs croaking, or 'blues' music played, off-stage is not necessarily a more dramatic method of creating atmosphere than creating it by verbal imagery. Both methods, wrongly used, can blur the dramatic impact of a scene, impeding character in action within a total situation, and the former method probably presents greater dangers to the dramatist. For one thing, it is much easier to use, necessitating, after conception, little more than a direction to the effects department, and for another, it makes an immediate impact, especially on that part of the audience which does not come to the theatre expecting to have to listen carefully to words.

The greatest discovery of twentieth century dramatic criticism is Professor Wilson Knight's, that the structure of a poetic play is based chiefly on the language, to which elements such as plot, characterization and effects are subservient. But popular dramatists who express their personal or social intensities through simple characters must find means other than language to achieve their stage successes, because the characters they envisage have no language, and must express themselves by shrugging and bellowing in the dumb-ox manner of, say, Brick in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, or Eddie in *A View from the Bridge*. The last two O'Neill plays seen here probably demonstrate the limit of achievement of a theatre which seeks to indicate central truth about a society by illuminating its perimeter (and usually low) extremes. Such achievements are magnificent, but we limit ourselves if we exclude other kinds of play.

'Rhetorical' has become a dirty word to use of an element in a play. But Perpetua's breath-taking sentence (forty-four lines of it), the prelude to her refusal of the Duke's advances in *Venus Observed*,

makes a subtle dramatic moment. As, verbally, she rises out of the Duke's orbit, superior by reason of her youthful innocence and exuberance, she takes the audience with her, preparing it for her blunt three-word refusal; a dramatic effect achieved purely by rhetoric and poetry. By the same means, the last speeches of Dr Faustus, Othello and Philoctetes succeed.

But Mr Osborne is reflecting popular taste, which could not bear such a play as Whiting's *Marching Song*, a 'word' play of superb richness, which I here declare to be the finest and most (claptrap word!) profound play written in England or America since the war.
Brighton Brian Stone

[Charles Osborne replies: I am sorry if Mr Stone has gathered the impression that I am against poetic drama. What in fact I wished to see excluded from the theatre was that type of pseudo-poetry that so often passes for the real thing with theatre audiences.

I should like to add here that I am a keen admirer of the plays of Mr John Whiting, and of *Marching Song* in particular.]

THE NEXT NUMBER

The London Magazine

Vol. 6, Number 7, will be out in mid-June and
will contain among other contributions

Henry Miller : *Children of the Earth*

William Plomer : *Voorslag Days*

A. O. Chater : *The Archery Contest*

L. P. Hartley on Thomas Mann, Evelyn Waugh and Joyce Cary

Book Reviews



THE ECCENTRIC DESIGN by Marius Bewley. (*Chatto and Windus*. 25s.)

CONRAD THE NOVELIST by Albert J. Guerard. (*Harvard University Press and O.U.P.* 30s.)

Mr Bewley's book on nineteenth-century American novelists is a welcome and worthy successor to his *Complex Fate*. It makes difficult reading, sometimes because of the subtlety of Mr Bewley's thought, but sometimes also, I fear, because of the diffuse, wordy, and abstract style into which he allows himself to lapse. He has a liking for moribund metaphors like 'level' and 'focus', which makes parts of his book very painful to visualizers. Nor is the presentation of the book pleasing—at any rate to an English reader. It consists essentially of a series of critical essays on five novelists: Cooper, Hawthorne, Melville, Henry James, and Scott Fitzgerald. These in themselves are good, though not equally good. But they are embedded like plums in a cake of cultural history which is far from appetizing. I do not think Mr Bewley's best criticism depends in any vital respect on his cultural history. However, this is to beg a question which I shall raise again presently.

The best chapters in the book seem to me those on Hawthorne. Here Mr Bewley supplements what he wrote in *The Complex Fate*; and I believe that in these pages of Mr Bewley's, together with Henry James's book and Mrs Q. D. Leavis's essay, we have all we want on Hawthorne. Mr Bewley convincingly makes out his main thesis, which is that Hawthorne was preoccupied, not with the private mental life of his characters, nor even with their moral problems as individuals, but with what might be called problems of social psychology which had come home to him in a very direct way. But he applied to them, not the technique of a social scientist or anthropologist, but a myth-making imagination like that of Novalis or Kafka or the long-ago inventors of the great legends. Mr Bewley brings out very well the curiously attractive and original nature of Hawthorne's genius at its best. At the same time, he is not uncritical: he is duly severe on the limitations, weaknesses and sillinesses which annoy us in things like *The Blithedale Romance*. Mr Bewley seems justified too in the profounder criticism he implies when he points out that Hawthorne, although

he liked to use the symbolism of religion, was a much less deeply religious man *au fond* than Melville. But there are depths in Hawthorne also, and Mr Bewley shows us where they are, in Hawthorne's treatment of his characteristic theme of human isolation. Here, however, Mr Bewley's politico-sociological doctrine interferes. He relates Hawthorne's preoccupation with isolation directly to his sense of the ambiguous status of the artist in democratic America. But artists felt isolated in Victorian England, which was nothing like so democratic as nineteenth-century America, or in the France of Napoleon III, which was even less.

I do not agree with all Mr Bewley's analyses of Hawthorne's tales: but this is inevitable in view of the ambivalence of much of Hawthorne's symbolism (as in *The Minister's Black Veil*). And even when one disagrees one is given plenty to think about. In comparison, Mr Bewley is disappointing on Melville (as he was in *The Complex Fate*). He seems (not unnaturally) to shrink from sending us off once again on that terrible voyage with Captain Ahab and his fellow-bores. Surely it must be said that although Melville was probably the greatest genius that American literature has produced, and although the genius is amply apparent in *Moby Dick*, it is a confused, chaotic, and frequently very bad book. What the English reader needs is a firm direction to things like *Bartleby the Scrivener* and *Benito Cereno*. They show Melville's genius without its exasperating qualities. Mr Bewley's treatment of Melville leaves the subject rather blurred. This time we are invited to 'approach' *Moby Dick* via Dante and the Bible. It is another exercise—and, it must be granted, a quite interesting exercise—in telling Melville what he really meant. No very clear impression was left on my mind except what I have already mentioned: that Melville was a deeply religious man, and that, if a sceptic, he was an agonized one, not a scoffer. He is sceptical only in the sense in which the darker parts of the Book of Job are sceptical. Mr Bewley does his best with that dreadful book *The Confidence Man*, to read which is like having a tooth drilled (Melville himself, I think, used the metaphor of a threshers). But the Melville he leaves us with is one whom respectful English readers are more likely to 'approach' than read.

Mr Bewley is interesting on Henry James, though the scope of his book permits him to consider only one or two facets of that strange genius. Since his critical position forbids him to call a writer a great or even a good novelist unless the latter's general 'values' are sound, he has some difficulties with James—as all such critics must do. This is not only because of the famous 'ambiguities' in James's later books. In what consists the *moral* superiority of

the way in which Isabel Archer got through her day, over the way Madame Merle got through hers? I cannot see that James anywhere conveys a positive *moral* account of the good life. But this does not make him a bad or faulty novelist. He is, however, a much more subjective, inward and odd one than Mr Bewley (I think) recognizes. Yet the chapter on 'Henry James and "Life"' will repay close reading. It is a reminder of the elusiveness of the meaning of that word in James, and of the ideal transvaluation of both European and American civilization for which it seems to stand.

With Scott Fitzgerald the difficulties of Mr Bewley's critical position increase. He admires Fitzgerald and so finds himself trying to justify the soundness of Fitzgerald's 'values'. But surely it is obvious that Fitzgerald's 'values' were wrong. He attached more importance to the possession of money than a reasonable man should. Both his beglamoured and his bitter feelings about wealth reveal this. But this does not make him a bad novelist. Perhaps it is Mr Bewley's embarrassment in this chapter that makes him write carelessly. Some of the things he says about *The Diamond as big as the Ritz* are not borne out by the passages he quotes. It is true that the story itself is carelessly written. Mr Bewley probably overrates Fitzgerald, like most American critics. But he does make me want to read *The Great Gatsby* again. Only an American critic, and only one with the sensitiveness of intelligence that Mr Bewley has, could bring out the full pathos and irony of that story. One detail that Mr Bewley says (I think) nothing about, is Gatsby's being a gangster, or at least an associate of gangsters. Is this a further irony? (Gatsby's dream is supposed to symbolize 'the American dream'.) If so, its point is not clear to me. Gatsby's gangsterdom *in the story* seems morally non-significant.

I have said nothing about Mr Bewley's chapters on Fenimore Cooper. These will have a different kind of interest for the English reader, since he has not read Cooper. It seems to me that they fit best into Mr Bewley's cultural-historical thesis, because Cooper does write directly 'about' the differing political philosophies of his time. It takes a critic of Mr Bewley's ingenuity to find much politics in Hawthorne or Melville. And even in James they seem pretty vague: a matter of struggling to decide, in his later books, whether he does or does not approve of very rich men. Mr Bewley of course is writing a very peculiar sort of cultural history. Starting from the rival philosophies represented by the names of John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and Thomas Jefferson, he attempts to show their repercussions, tensions, and contrasting claims being made

manifest in the *spiritual* content of literature. In so far as they are, we have the distinctive Americanness of American literature. Mr Bewley speaks of 'the American experience' and 'the American novel'. It seems to me a dangerous way of talking. Everything is unverifiable in this kind of cultural history. The choice of 'representative' Americans is so arbitrary. Surely Hawthorne, Melville and Henry James are very queer fish by any standards, especially the last two: it is hard to see them as 'representative' of *anything*. This kind of spiritual history is best done in the inspired aperçus of a D. H. Lawrence. Worked out in a scholarly and factual way by Mr Bewley it seems less convincing. However, the English reader may treat the history as binding-matter for the criticism. The book would have held together better if Edith Wharton had been included. 'Great' or not, she requires less historical extenuation than Cooper, Hawthorne, or Melville. She would have supplied a useful link between the later James and the world of Scott Fitzgerald.

Mr Guerard's book on Conrad is also to be recommended. He makes the kind of personal-psychological approach to his subject which Mr Bewley eschews, and perhaps does not altogether avoid its dangers. Thus, by stressing the obsessional aspect of Conrad's preoccupation with 'testing' (the complex kinds of responsibility which may befall a ship's captain) he empties it of some of its artistic significance. But he undoubtedly brings some light on some of Conrad's peculiarities: for instance, that romanticizing of women which seems to cover fear and hostility. Conrad obviously wrote too much: F. R. Leavis did an admirable job of weeding him out in *The Great Tradition*. Mr Guerard offers an alternative way of clearing the shrubbery. He is severe on the later work (excepting *Chance*, full of perversities as he finds it, and *The Shadow Line*). He ejects *Victory*, preferring even *The Arrow of Gold*. I find this an odd choice. *Victory* does have that queer silent-film effect which suggests a very tired writer, but it is impressive, whereas I have never found anyone but Mr Guerard who didn't think *The Arrow of Gold* a pot-boiler. Mr Guerard has a lengthy study, sentence by sentence at times, of *Lord Jim*. He makes it seem a work of Melvillian ambiguity. Surely the bright reader gets the 'point' sooner than Mr Guerard seems to think. Mr Guerard has interesting things to say about the amazing variation of quality in Conrad's writing, not only from book to book but within the same book: he finds this in *Nostromo*—though not, curiously enough, in *Under Western Eyes*, where the discrepancy between the early and later parts is most staggering. *Nostromo* is certainly too self-conscious in its determination that every detail shall be charged with significance. It is

over-written. None the less, it is a remarkable book, and this Mr Guerard does not deny. Indeed, it seems to me that he is on the whole fair to Conrad, though the impression one takes away is more of Conrad the sufferer than of Conrad the creative artist.

W. W. ROBSON

TURGENEV'S LITERARY REMINISCENCES AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL FRAGMENTS: with an Essay by Edmund Wilson. Translated with an Introduction by David Magarshack. (Faber. 25s.)

This is a rich, surprising volume. Nobody before, it seems, had thought it worthwhile to translate Turgenev's *Literary Reminiscences* into English. Suddenly, with some fragments of a more personal and subjective sort, they are dropped into our lap in Mr Magarshack's excellent translation.

It may sound absurd to speak of a translation as excellent when (unlike Mr Edmund Wilson) one cannot read Russian; but the quality of Mr Magarshack's Turgenev-prose inspires confidence. One has only to compare the texture of his own Introduction with that of his version of Turgenev's *Instead of an Introduction*, to see how completely, in the act of translation, a different rhythm, spirit and sensibility takes over. And if that is not enough, turn to *About Nightingales*, a fragment taken down almost verbatim by Turgenev from the lips of an old house-serf. All consciousness of translation disappears; there is no artificiality or clumsiness; it is the old man speaking. One might set this as an advanced exercise for translators: Turn an old serf's onomatopoeic description of a nightingale's song into onomatopoeic English. Mr Magarshack succeeds so well that if it were not too long I should quote the whole of the old man's rendering of the nightingale's 'ten tunes'. Here is the beginning, which anyone who has ever tried to separate the nightingale's musical themes will recognize as perfect: 'A good nightingale must sing very clearly, he mustn't mix up his different tunes. . . .

First: Chucking: chuck-chuck-chuck-chuck-chuck.

Second: Yaffle-yaffle-yaffle, like a woodpecker.

Third: Shot—sounds like dropping a lot of shot on the ground.

Fourth: Ripple-trrrrr. . . .

Fifth: Plen-plen-plen-plen—very distinctly.'

And so on. The long monologue might have dropped entire out of *A Sportsman's Sketches*.

Turgenev wrote his *Literary Reminiscences* towards the end of his life, when his great reputation in Russia had been so damaged by the attacks of *avant-garde* utilitarian critics that it must have

seemed as though it would never recover. He, who had been abused, imprisoned and driven abroad for his liberal principles, was now shouted down as a reactionary, uncommitted politically, a detached bourgeois, etc. This wounded Turgenev, whose integrity, both as artist and man, has always been one of the most moving things about him. He was concerned with life and truth, not at all with propaganda; his humane and progressive views had always kept him on the political left, but he could not write in terms of black and white because life was not like that, and neither was art. He had perfected an oblique and subtle mode of narration, never explicitly stating a case one way or the other, yet leaving his reader intuitively certain of where his own sympathies lay. 'Believe me,' he had written in 1880, 'no man of real talent ever serves aims other than his own and he finds satisfaction in himself alone; the life that surrounds him provides him with the contents of his works; he is its *concentrated reflection*; but he is as incapable of writing a panegyric as a lampoon. . . . When all is said and done—that is beneath him. Only those who can do no better submit to a given theme or carry out a programme.'

In the *Reminiscences* Turgenev sought to explain, rather than to justify, the direction that his life as a writer had taken. He had left Russia for western Europe because 'I could not breathe the same air as those who stood for the things I hated so much. . . . I had to put a certain distance between myself and my enemy so as to be able to attack him more effectively. . . . In my eyes this enemy had a clearly defined form and bore a well-known name: this enemy was serfdom.' He had first come upon the Russian literary scene, as a very young man, in the late eighteen-thirties. His earliest work, a poem, had been singled out for shrewd praise by Belinsky, the great Russian critic, and the two became friends for life. Turgenev's *Reminiscences of Belinsky* is one of the best things in the present book, and his sketches of Gogol and of such writers as Krylov and Lermontov have a peculiarly lively freshness. Turgenev, incidentally, seems to have been the only person who heard both Dickens and Gogol reading in public, and his comparison of the two is memorable. 'That day he (Gogol) certainly did look a sick man. He began to read and gradually grew animated. His cheeks coloured slightly, his eyes widened and brightened. . . . I heard him for the first and last time that day. Dickens, also an excellent reader, could be said to give a public performance of his novels; his reading was dramatic, almost theatrical; there were several first-class actors in his face alone who made you laugh and cry. Gogol, on the other hand, struck me by the extraordinary simplicity

and restraint of his manner, by a sort of grave and at the same time naïve sincerity; he did not seem to care whether there were any listeners or what they were thinking of. It seemed as though all Gogol was concerned about was how to convey his own impression more convincingly.'

In a collection of this sort, which has no real shape and is really a handful of fragments, every reader will make his own favourite discovery. Mine (apart from the nightingales) is perhaps *The Execution of Tropmann*, a startlingly vivid account of the last hours and death of a murderer. Tropmann was a young man who had committed a particularly wholesale and horrifying murder, and in January 1870 Turgenev, then living in Paris, was invited to the prison to witness his execution. His account has that moving simplicity and candour, that recognition of the force of evil and refusal to capitulate to it, which Edmund Wilson calls the 'life-giving drop' to be found at the heart of all Turgenev's work. It is a strong plea against capital punishment, and being Turgenev's, persuades without ever seeming to be explicit. One could hardly have a better example of the delicate observation, of heart and intellect working exquisitely together, which gives Turgenev's work its unique flavour.

As a writer, his un-bitter pessimism puzzled or irritated many of his contemporaries. To understand it, one must know something of his life, and Edmund Wilson in a prefatory essay, which comes as a splendid make-weight with the *Reminiscences*, has drawn freely from Mr Magarshack's recent biography of Turgenev. (Mr Wilson's essay, in a shortened form, originally appeared two years ago in *The New Yorker*.) Turgenev suffered in youth from a mother so fiendish-hearted and ogreish that it is only by the most disciplined effort that one can believe in her. Compared with Varvara Petrovna, the Murdstones were as doves. His childhood was unspeakably unhappy, and the wretchedness of his servitude under this powerful gorgon taught him all he knew about the power of evil, killed his religious faith, and finally brought about the death of hope. Mr Wilson traces the effect of this complex early wound on the development of Turgenev's mind and art, discovering afresh the 'peculiar nobility' of nature which enabled him to emerge, not as a neurotic, but as a being for ever in sympathy with the human heart, however hideous its aberrations. 'It is as if his sense of justice, his magnanimity, his instinct to see things in their proper proportions had been prodded to especial stubbornness, in the household of Varvara Petrovna, by injustice, vindictiveness, and outrageous pretensions.'

MARGARET LANE

THE BLUSH AND OTHER STORIES by Elizabeth Taylor. (*Peter Davies. 15s.*)

THE GO-AWAY BIRD WITH OTHER STORIES by Muriel Spark. (*Macmillan. 13s. 6d.*)

A LONG WAY FROM LONDON by Dan Jacobson. (*Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 15s.*)

A THIRSTY EVIL by Gore Vidal. (*Heinemann. 12s. 6d.*)

BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S by Truman Capote. (*Hamish Hamilton. 12s. 6d.*)

The short story is plainly not what it was. Earlier in the century a large part of the reputation of important writers often rested on their productions in this field but now it seems as if the virtue has departed from it. Henry James is not a fair instance. All his stories are longish and the most memorable and successful of them could perfectly well—and some no doubt actually do—pass as novels in the age of Françoise Sagan. But Joyce and Lawrence are very much to the point. Many people would still hold, despite the enormous and comprehensive claims it has become usual to make for his more protracted novels, that the volume of *Tales* contains the best things Lawrence ever did. In the story his fecundity was kept in place, prevented by the demands of the form from running out into repetition and irrelevance. At a less serious level something of the same sort might reasonably be said about Huxley. *The Gioconda Smile* and *The Tillotson Banquet* may be pieces of machinery but the machinery works. In the same general region of merit are to be found a fair number of writers whose fictional reputation rests entirely or primarily on their stories: Walter de la Mare, T. F. Powys, H. E. Bates, V. S. Pritchett. The only prominent novelist of the nineteen-thirties (since Isherwood hardly counts, his Berlin stories being rather fragments of an unwritten novel) who gave any successful and intensive consideration to the story was Elizabeth Bowen and since the war none of the most interesting writers of fiction, with the sole exception of Angus Wilson, have written stories at all. From L. P. Hartley an occasional ghost story in the manner of M. R. James; from Anthony Powell nothing; from Iris Murdoch one anthology contribution; from William Golding one shortish fantasy. The list could be easily extended.

One probable reason for the collapse of the form is simply the ease with which its possibilities can be exhausted. Their size makes stories at once easier to produce than novels and harder to vary. It is traditional to believe that there are two essential varieties of story—the evocation of a mood *à la* Tchekhov and Katherine

Mansfield, and the Maupassantian anecdote. Both have been run firmly into the ground by unremitting exploitation—the mood-piece at a middlebrow level (in the older *Lilliput*, for example), the anecdote all over the place and especially in science and detective fiction. The shorter the story the more its author has to rely on types, whether arche- or stereo-, and the more he has to count on his audience's power of filling in the necessary omissions. If he does try to introduce something new it has to be done abruptly, hence the excessive reliance on fantasy. Fiction deals with the actions of human beings and if justice is to be done human beings must be given enough time to state their cases. Mood stories and anecdotes are a natural outcome of this situation for in them one aspect of a complete fictional work is extracted and the human foundation is left to take care of itself. The current economics of the matter cannot be left out. The editors of periodicals are on the look-out for the shortest of stories; as the costs of printing soar away from the spending habits of readers the market increasingly concentrates its requirements on things like Maugham's *Cosmopolitans*. Yet the shorter the story the more exhausted the form appears. There have been successful stories in recent years—*The Old Man And The Sea*, *The Loved One*, *Seize The Day*—but they are counted nowadays as novels.

In these circumstances it is not surprising that the most memorable and impressive of the forty-six stories in these five collections should be the two long ones: Truman Capote's and Muriel Spark's title-stories. Both of these are studies of women: Mr Capote's Holly Golightly is a hectic, disorganized party-piece, using her sexual attractions in the way a thug uses his muscles, and yet endowed, by an extraordinary feat of skill on Mr Capote's part, with really convincing charm and vitality; Miss Spark's Daphne du Toit is a more gentle, negative figure, progressively victimized by her own inertia and the determination of others. Holly winds in and out of the dim and dainty life of the narrator and then prudently disappears to come back to his thoughts years later in the form of an ambiguous echo. It would be natural to think of Mr Capote as a fancy or precious writer yet the most remarkable feature of this story is its unwavering honesty, first about the narrator's relation to Holly and secondly in the representation of Holly herself. The narrator is neither patronizing nor self-pitying about her while Holly is the rare case of a person who justifies wild and inconsiderate behaviour on the grounds of freedom and sincerity and really does justify it. Miss Spark's Daphne du Toit is less of an achievement, as a natural victim she makes less of an impression

than the wilful and rapacious Holly, yet there is a satisfying order about the course of events in which she is caught up: the protected African childhood, the longings for England whose satisfaction is delayed by the war, the exploitation of her time, money and love that she is subjected to when she gets there, and the final, predestined, violent death she suffers when she returns.

Mrs Taylor is perhaps the most conventional, or at least familiar in approach, of the five authors. Her stories, like her novels, are approximately Bowenoid, and concern sensitive young women, more or less dotty older ones and the comical poor. Her technique is consummate, her responses subtle, her eye penetrating. But there is a slightly unearthly facility about the way in which she manages to adjust herself to such different outlets as the *Cornhill* and the *New Yorker* on the one hand and *Woman's Own* and *Woman and Beauty* on the other. For the popular mass-circulation women's magazines she provides either their usual pabulum most competently dressed up (as in a story of a man making a last painful visit to the child-garnished woman he loves where they are unable to speak of their great renunciation) or variations on well-established themes (the plain girl at the dance). Satirical matter is reserved for more selected audiences. There is a simple but very entertaining story of a young man getting drunk on his honeymoon night and drifting back to his parents' home, forgetting entirely his new bride fuming upstairs in the honeymoon hotel in her brand-new seductive nightie, which would cut far too near the bone for *Woman's Own*. There is nothing, of course, wrong with variety but there is a certain heartlessness about the all-purpose utility of Mrs Taylor's indubitable skill.

Miss Spark, on the other hand, is an exceedingly uneven writer. *The Go-Away Bird* itself is a rounded and satisfying performance but many of her shorter pieces are painfully whimsical. In one story there is an interesting picture of a progressive catholic working-class couple who unexpectedly become the parents of a black child, the progressiveness at this point sharply leaking away. The trouble is that the crucial event is unintelligible. The woman cannot have had an affair with one of the coloured men they have befriended or the whole structure of her and her husband's characters comes to pieces. But if so why should the miracle be such a left-handed one? Nearly all the stories have some irruption of plain magic into them of a more or less gross and arbitrary kind. The liberties she takes are too extreme, the revealing confusion she aims to produce envelops the reader too. Even in the best of the shorter stories—*You Should Have Seen The Mess*—the

hygiene-maniac who tells the story is too dense a medium for anything definite, beyond the amusing record of a manner of speech, to come through.

Mr Dan Jacobson also writes about Africa and Africans, indeed exclusively so in this collection, but with an absolute maximum of plainness. In the simplest and clearest English and with an utter minimum of ornamentation or variety of tone, he writes of the moral dilemmas of white men in Africa, especially where these arise from differences of colour or nationality. So level and steady is his tone that it is as if he were always writing about the same people. Two stories—*The Stranger* and *Request Stop*—do not come off at all; the former because it is written in a more than ordinarily stiff and abstract way so that all trace of humanity is drained from the central figure, the latter because absolutely nothing whatever happens, the thing is like a note of a scene and an atmosphere which might be used for a story. The best of the collection is the last—*The Promised Land*—which is about growing up and the discovery that love, however genuine, is not necessarily returned. Here the slightly oppressive sense of public responsibility that hangs over the stories about interracial contacts is wholly absent.

The only other work of Mr Gore Vidal's I have read is a fairly early novel—*The City and the Pillar*—in which the engrossingly scandalous quality of the material was not enough to compensate for the unspeakable crudeness of the writing. Mr Vidal's style was that of the explanatory notes in a railway time-table. In the seven stories of *A Thirsty Evil*, which are also for the most part about homosexuality, a very much firmer grip of the technique of writing is displayed. The better of these stories are ironical comments on the complex contrivances and mannerisms of the homosexual life. They are quite funny, a little sad and, on the whole, distinctly artificial. In the end he has one basic subject, a very specific loss of innocence by American youths of the wandering student type. Since this is a short book, composed of a handful of very short stories, the theme has no time to pall. But it easily could.

Breakfast at Tiffany's is short too but it could very well be longer. It makes it quite clear that Mr Capote is not, as one might well have thought on the basis of *Other Voices*, *Other Rooms*, just one of a number of colourful, cheerfully decadent post-war American writers. These stories are beautifully exact and illuminating creations, even the mildly sugary piece of Caribbean pastoral *House Of Flowers*. He has the same sort of indescribable talent that the most naturally gifted singers possess; like them he just

hits the right note. The same unerring judgement that enabled him to triumph over all the disastrous possibilities of a character like Holly Golightly sees him through a brilliantly unsentimental but unquestionably moving account of the relations between a small boy and his oppressed, simple-minded aunt. There is no point in going on about this book, all one can do is strenuously recommend that it be read. In our literary environment it has the same sort of decision and authority that Isherwood's first writings must have exhibited twenty years ago.

ANTHONY QUINTON

BRAVE NEW WORLD REVISITED by Aldous Huxley. (*Chatto and Windus*. 12s. 6d.)

Writers of novels-about-the-future tend to think, as it were, along straight lines: their arguments, however logical in themselves, are necessarily based upon an arbitrarily selected set of premisses, conditioned largely by personal prejudice. If this was true of Wells, it was no less true of Aldous Huxley; Wells's Utopian romances, appearing round about the turn of the century, presupposed as axiomatic that scientific 'progress' must work for the betterment of human society; Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) merely showed the reverse of the medal: a wholly pessimistic book, it was one of the earlier counterblasts to the Wellsian conception of a scientific Utopia—earlier, though by no means the earliest, for Huxley had in fact been anticipated, twenty years before, by G. K. Chesterton. *The Ball and the Cross* was published in 1910; since it has been long out of print and seems to have been largely forgotten, it is perhaps worthwhile, in this context, to draw attention to it.

Huxley's vision of the future is mainly a technological one, while Orwell's is strictly political; Chesterton's, on the other hand, is—as one would expect—theological, he is preoccupied less with science or politics than with the basic conflict between Good and Evil, Belief and Disbelief. As a novel, *The Ball and the Cross* is not one of Chesterton's best: it is far too long and diffuse, and the protracted, symbolic duel between the Catholic and the Atheist becomes a bit of a bore; yet the later chapters, in which Believer and non-Believer alike become the victims of a nightmare political régime under which both are regarded as dangerous lunatics, are, both historically and in a purely literary context, prophetic, foreshadowing not only the modern totalitarian state, but also the mood of *The Trial* and *The Castle*—and, more pertinently, of 1984. In some respects,

of course, the book must strike a modern reader as dated; yet even to an unbeliever such as myself, Chesterton's analysis of the human predicament seems more searching and more profound than the anti-Utopian fables of Orwell or of Huxley. Unlike Chesterton, the two later writers both assume, broadly speaking, that *Homo sapiens* is, *in posse* if not *in esse*, a rational animal, and both tend to neglect—or seriously to underestimate—the obstinately mythopoeic element in the human psyche. In *Brave New World* Our Lord was replaced by Our Ford, in 1984 the religious impulse has been canalized into the officially-imposed cult of Big Brother; both these fantasies have proved in some degree prophetic, yet the fact remains that, in 1959, both Rome and Islam—not to mention the Orthodox Church—are still powerful factors in the political scene, and seem likely to remain so; and one might add, as a rider to this, that among western intellectuals, the influence of Jung shows a tendency to predominate over that of Freud. Chesterton's bouncing, Wardour Street Catholicism has given way to the soft-pedalled neo-Jansenism of Mauriac, Greene and Waugh, and Mr Maclan, the swashbuckling Jacobite hero of *The Ball and the Cross*, might well be puzzled by such tracts for the times as *The Heart of the Matter* or *Brideshead Revisited*; yet he would note that the Church still has her martyrs, and he would conclude, I suspect, that we were still, in the mid-twentieth century, a long way from Room 101 or the Central London Hatchery.

In his new book Mr Huxley surveys the technological advances and political trends of the last thirty years, and considers that, on the available evidence, the future is more likely to resemble his own *Brave New World* than the world of 1984. Many of the developments adumbrated in his novel are already well under way: in the Iron Curtain countries the freedom of the individual, as we understand it, has virtually ceased to exist, and, as he says, 'even in those countries that have a tradition of democratic government, this freedom and even the desire for this freedom seem to be on the wane. . . . The nightmare of total organization, which I had situated in the seventh century after Ford, has emerged from the safe, remote future and is now awaiting us, just around the next corner.' Referring to 1984, he points out, with some justice, that 'recent developments in Russia, and recent advances in science and technology, have robbed Orwell's books of some of its gruesome verisimilitude', and he considers that the further advance of totalitarian rule will be effected less by violence than by the increasing use of propaganda, brain-washing, subliminal persuasion and the various tranquillizing or stimulant drugs. The greater part of the book is

taken up with a comparative analysis of these non-violent instruments of power, and the facts which Mr Huxley has assembled are both fascinating and extremely frightening. He feels, as he says, a good deal less optimistic now than he did in 1932, when Hitler had not yet come to power and Stalinism had hardly got into its stride. Above all, he emphasizes the stark facts of overpopulation and diminishing resources: with the birth rate rising and the death rate decreasing at their present ratio, the world's population may be doubled in another fifty years. 'As large and increasing numbers press more heavily upon available resources, the economic position . . . becomes ever more precarious,' till a state of permanent crisis supervenes; and a 'permanent crisis justifies permanent control of everybody and everything by the agency of the central government'—in other words, the problem can only be solved by a totalitarian régime in which the individual is reduced to a cypher.

What is the alternative? Mr Huxley has no very constructive suggestions to make; in his final chapter, 'What can be done?' he sums up his arguments: Over-population—'obviously we must, with all possible speed, reduce the birth rate to the point where it does not exceed the death rate'; Over-organization—'it is a political axiom that power follows property. . . . Therefore, if you believe in democracy, make arrangements to distribute property as widely as possible.' Admirable advice—but how is such a programme to be carried out except by resorting to the totalitarian methods which it is expressly designed to avoid? Mr Huxley has no answer—or if he has one, he proffers it only by implication. If only, he seems to be saying, mankind by some miracle could suddenly be purged, overnight, of his lust for power, his aggressiveness, his superstition, all would be easy; or even, perhaps, if Mr Krushchev were to be replaced, say, by Bertrand Russell, and President Eisenhower by—well, why not Mr Huxley himself? But alas, man remains an irrational animal—pugnacious, power-loving and (even) religious; nor does there seem much chance of Mr Huxley running for the presidency.

This is a saddening book, not only because of its profound pessimism, but because it invites comparison with the novel to which it is a pendant. In *Brave New World* Mr Huxley was still writing with much of his original brio, and one misses here, as in all his later work, the gaiety and wit which made his early books so enjoyable. Goodness knows, there is little enough nowadays to be gay about, but one notices an increasing tiredness in Mr Huxley's writing, and a growing habit (always a danger with him) of dropping into literary clichés—e.g., Man's inhumanity to man, Beauty-is-truth-truth-beauty, Their's not to reason why, etc, etc. Mr Huxley

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remains as wise, humane and inexhaustibly intelligent as ever; but he says little or nothing in this book which he has not said, more cogently and more eloquently, before.

JOCELYN BROOKE

POSSIBLE LAUGHTER by James Michie. (*Hart-Davis*. 10s. 6d.)

DOMESTIC INTERIOR by Laurence Lerner. (*Hutchinson*. 15s.)

THE LOSS OF THE MAGYAR by Patricia Beer. (*Longmans*. 10s. 6d.)

GOODBYE EARTH by I. A. Richards. (*Routledge*. 12s. 6d.)

The 'possible laughter' of Mr Michie's title is the Yeatsian gaiety that can come with the acceptance of one's own disastrous times, and many of the poems in his book veer between such an acceptance and the anger and protest that must precede—indeed, accompany—it. This attitude gives Mr Michie's poetry that connection with life as it is lived which all poets seek and which is so elusive today. To such a fundamentally fertile and relevant orientation Mr Michie brings outstanding qualities of technical accomplishment, wit and observation.

His characteristic poem is short and neat, of epigrammatic force. The two stanzas of 'Nightmare', for instance, about parents failing to comfort children who wake in the night, ends like this:

Pains are not charmed by visitors in furs,
Nor devils conjured out by passionate amateurs.

Several poems have a disarranged but inevitable word-order, a cunningly oblique simplicity, an unsentimental tenderness, that recall the best of Ransom:

Tail like a painful splinter,
Sham blood running down his chest,
Robin makes the best
Of begging, and with 'Oh sir' 'Please sir' acts
Orphan all winter.

But it would be a mistake to think of Mr Michie simply as a short-breathed, one-point poet, like Norman Cameron. He has another style, and not a clotted, turgid one, either, which is seen best, perhaps, in a remarkable sequence of poems called 'Three Dreams':

In a gap in the forest I come upon the lion and the wolf
Fighting to the death, the lion losing,
His face gory, righteous, amazed.

In such poems Mr Michie handles free verse and the long line as skilfully as he does rhyme and the strict stanza.

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Some of the pieces do not come off: there is occasionally a too easy conclusion about 'love', a too facetious echo of late-Auden; and possibly too many of the best poems come in the first half of the book. But there is no doubt that this is a collection to be bought, enjoyed and re-read.

I cannot be so enthusiastic about Mr Lerner, though he, too, often writes admirably about a real and recognizable world, and sometimes strikes out a most excellent phrase:

While shaping eyes stare from the moving train:
Or else a water-colour landscape glows
Grey-green and tawny under a wash of rain,
Or blue with blobs of cabbages in rows.

Admirable also is his constant effort to extend the range of his themes and imagery, though in a way this is what leads him to accept material too banal for the burden he puts on it. A poem called 'Them', for example, begins with the poet changing his library book, then mingling with the crowd from a soccer international and thinking of the triviality of its occupation, ashamedly wishing it unemployed and hungry. The poem's conclusion shows Mr Lerner's strength and weakness:

One needs
A hunger march that will not hurt one's feet.
All I can recommend is poetry.
—It's restful, though of course one gets upset.

This is subtle and felt, but one cannot quite forget the unsatisfactory apparatus that led up to it, and though the last line is not ineffective it has a needlessly Wainesque monosyllabic inelegance. It is characteristic that in this poem workers stride inappropriately 'through the road'; that Mr Lerner repeatedly writes the jarring amalgam 'onto'. The general air of carelessness surrounding much of his verse is not offset by its undoubted vigour. However, I do not wish to leave the impression that this is not an interesting book. It is; and there are several possible ways of development for Mr Lerner to interest us much more.

Easy to see why *The Loss of the Magyar* became the choice of the Poetry Book Society: it is full of 'poetry':

So come I into church again
My body straight as thunder rain
My mouth grey as sirocco skies.
My lids are newly-fallen snow
And no March now will ever show
The tears that bloom inside my eyes.

Thus the start of the first poem in the book, 'Juliet'. If this were

all to Patricia Beer her collection could be silently interred with the volumes of poetry that charitably remain unreviewed in these columns. But one turns the page and finds:

... long before
The duke and the duke's horse
Tumbled out of the war . . .

Every now and then the author brings something as good as this out of the bag: a strong verbal evocation (as in my example); a fine observation:

Trees humped like snails
Draw in their sensitive last inch of shadow
As noon halloos and hunts over the roofs;
or occasionally a piece of sheer inspiration: 'sleep is not like dying,
More like going mad'.

But such things seem to me to be embedded for the most part in illogical, meaningless or nonsensical settings, examples of each of which I give below:

In the prison camp they hankered every day
For a land where sorrow smelled as delicate
As wild flowers . . .

I cannot for the life of me see why the prisoners of the poem should hanker for sorrow, of whatever smell.

And no boat danced on death more blind
And buoyantly
Than did the hero.

How, I ask myself, can one dance on death?

Oh, magic is as hard to scan
As a skylark.

I do not believe one can *scan* magic.

If my comments seem obtuse, the reader must understand that phrases like those I have quoted constantly occur, and no poetry can survive unless it is grounded in concrete meaning—at the very least in the meaning given by its own terms. The looseness of this book and its immediate acceptance by critics such as the Poetry Book Society selectors seem to me to merit severity, even though its author is almost certainly capable of better things.

If only *Goodbye Earth* could have been put with the discarded volumes! But readers of this magazine have a right to know what Professor Richards' poems are like. Some critics have remarked unfavourably about the explanatory introduction and notes to this comparatively short book, on the tough puzzle element in the poems themselves. I think such things are of little importance. It is language, after all, we say to ourselves tritely, as we close

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the book, that determines what is and what is not poetry. How extraordinary that a critic who helped to shape the modern movement should clothe his poetic ideas in Hardy-esque reach-me-downs!

One says Hardy-esque, but only that poet's quaint grammatical forms (the askantlys and so forth), elaborate stanzas and gnarled provincial philosophizing aura are there: absent the narration, the observation of nature, the sense of tangled human relations. Here and there in *Goodbye Earth* (a neat villanelle, for example, and a reference to Newton buying a prism) one receives an impression of the impulse that must have gone to make these ingenious poems, but what comes out on the page is in too dry a tongue for speech. One is glad in the end of that introduction and those notes.

ROY FULLER

A GRAMMAR OF METAPHOR by Christine Brooke-Rose. (*Secker and Warburg*. 42s.)

'No passage in *The Campaign*,' Johnson writes in his life of Addison, 'has been more often mentioned than the simile of the Angel. . . . Let it be first inquired whether it be a simile.' And of course it is not: since Marlborough and the Angel are doing much the same thing in much the same manner, the supposed simile is 'a mere exemplification'. Johnson is not being pedantic, any more than he is being perverse when he goes on to make fun of the notion that the passage, whether simile or not, is 'remote from vulgar conceptions'. In a couple of acute and entertaining paragraphs he clears up effectively a whole confused area of critical terminology.

Miss Brooke-Rose, who is acute and entertaining too, is doing the same sort of work on a larger scale. Indeed, in what is to me the most interesting part of her book, the parallel is close. She separates out metaphor proper and what she calls 'literal symbol'—not without the suggestion that 'mere literal symbol' is the expression that really fits. The essential mechanism in metaphor is one of replacement. It can be as simple as Antony's 'The Witch shall die', as subtle as Caesar's 'We do launch / Diseases in our bodies', or as complex as in Dylan Thomas's *A grief ago*. As we read *Antony and Cleopatra* we do, in theory at least, decode, saying to ourselves 'Ah, witch—Cleopatra!' presumably with some pleasure at our own perspicacity. But we don't do this with the drowned Phoenician Sailor, the Lady of the Rocks, the man with the three staves, the Wheel, or even the one-eyed merchant—for here we have arrived in the territory of

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symbolism. 'Eliot,' Miss Brooke-Rose writes, 'imagines a Waste Land, with the dead tree, the cricket, the red rock and its shadow, all symbols which we have learnt to recognize, but the words are simply put down as if he were describing a real landscape. . . . To my mind, the kind of literal but symbolic noun found in Yeats and Eliot is not metaphor at all, since no other definite though unstated object is being changed into something else.' This is clearly true; and the distinction, when pursued, serves to show up usefully the unsatisfactory vagueness often attending the use of terms like 'poetic image' and 'objective correlative'. But like Aristotle (on whom indeed she comes down heavily), Miss Brooke-Rose awards particularly high marks to metaphor. Her private Class List (and her book does pleasantly smell of the Schools) seems to be headed by Donne, and it is not easy for anyone who has had a symbolist for tutor to land more than a good Second.

A living man is blind and drinks his drop.

What matter if the ditches are impure?

The ditches, we are told, replaces almost anything we care to think up. And in another place in Yeats ('Pride, like that of the morn . . .') the poet 'makes us feel' that a long string of 'absolutely literal' nouns 'are tremendously significant, symbolic of inspiration, love, life, death, God, anything we like'. It is being implied as more or less characteristic of Yeats and Eliot that 'strictly speaking, in the sense of words changing other words, there is no metaphor, no creative use of language'.

It is of course amusing—as it is no doubt correct—to exhibit Mr Eliot, whose Shakespeare and other Elizabethans are good or bad largely according as to whether or not they make words change other words, himself failing to exploit a notable technique for achieving this. But, believing that something fairly creative is made to happen when one reads *The Waste Land*, I am constrained to suppose that Miss Brooke-Rose overestimates the importance—at least the necessarily continuing importance today—of 'syntactically expressed metaphor'. On the other hand she displays the various modes of that metaphor's operation with wholly admirable thoroughness and lucidity, and upon a basis of competent scholarship sometimes lacking in writers ambitious to explain how poems work—and how they were designed to work, perhaps hundreds of years ago.

But what chiefly makes Miss Brooke-Rose's book so interesting, attractive and challenging to read is its casual-seeming mingling of description and analysis with appraisal. Of Wordsworth (*Prelude*, Book I) we learn that 'his Pointing Formulae are rather dull—

seven simple Appositions (two with colon, six Vocatives, no Parallelism except one with *and* which is hardly metaphoric, and only three of the syllogistic type with *this/that*). Keats 'goes rocketing up on Genitive Links' and is 'fairly high on verbs'. Donne and Shakespeare are both a little aggressive with the Copula, but this 'may conceivably have something to do with the spirit of the times'. Eliot is the only one of the poets studied who *never* uses the Copula — but whether the *Zeitgeist* may be operative here we are not told. Milton ('far less interesting' than Donne) shows 'lack of vitality with noun metaphors' but 'his use of verbs is a little more encouraging'. He is shown to be very like Mr Eliot both technically and (what takes Miss Brooke-Rose a shade off her main ground) as concerned with 'the aridity of sin and the sad, difficult and apparently arid business of salvation'. I am not wholly confident that this is innocent of some element of the mischievous. But it is certainly lively. Indeed the book's combination of liveliness and rigour may make it the *Seven Types of Ambiguity* of its generation. If this happens, we shall soon have poets mindful that the possessive adjective is the least satisfactory way of introducing the Simple Replacement metaphor, calculating their Three-Term Formulae or hazarding a Double Genitive Link — just as long ago (and to the great enrichment of English poetic) they meditated a pretty Epanorthosis or a careful Hyperbaton.

J. I. M. STEWART

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Notes About Our Authors

RACHEL TRICKETT was formerly Lecturer in English at the University of Hull, and is now Fellow and Tutor in English at St Hugh's College, Oxford. She has published three novels, *The Return Home*, *The Course of Love* and *Point of Honour* and has just completed a critical book on 18th century poetry.

VINCENT BROME has written five biographies, a novel, a play, several Third Programme Features and short stories. His new novel *Sometimes at Night* will be published by Cassell in October, and he has just completed a full-length play, *The Sleepless One*.

FRIEDRICH DÜRRENMATT was born in Switzerland in 1921. One of the leading playwrights of the younger generation writing in German, he is also a novelist. His plays have been widely performed in Europe, and one, *The Old Lady's Visit*, was produced in Newcastle in 1958.

LARRY RUBIN is 28. He teaches English at the Georgia Institute of Technology, and has contributed to many of the leading magazines and periodicals in the USA, but the poems in this number of *The London Magazine* are the first he has had printed in Britain.

DOM MORAES was born in India in 1938. He has travelled in Pakistan, Ceylon, Australia, New Zealand and South-East Asia, as well as in Europe. He came to England in 1955, went up to Jesus College, Oxford, in 1956 and published his first book of poems, *A Beginning*, for which he was awarded the Hawthornden Prize, in 1957.

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS, born in London in 1918, spent his early years in Hampshire. He read English at Oxford from 1939-43, and published several volumes of poems. He was appointed Gregory Fellow in poetry at Leeds University from 1952-55; and visiting Professor of English at the University of Alexandria from 1955-58.

EDWARD LOWBURY is a medical research worker in Birmingham. He has published one volume of poetry, and has contributed to many periodicals. With his wife, who is a musician, he is engaged on a study of the life and work of Thomas Campion.

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